Private initiation and the afterlife in classical Greece

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Abstract

Private initiators, freelance religious practitioners who worked for a fee, offered their clients a better fate after death. I survey the evidence for their activities in classical Greece, and try to determine the date they came into being, which I suggest may be the end of the fifth century, their relation to other forms of religion such as the cult of Dionysus and mainstream polis religion, and their views of the afterlife. I argue that they did not belong to anything that could be called a sect, a concept anachronistic for this period, and that they did not have a coherent doctrine of the afterlife, but rather employed a patchwork of different and inconsistent concepts. In particular, there is no evidence that they belonged to a group of Orphics in the sense in which this term is used by modern scholars. There is, however, a basic similarity which can be seen in a number of disparate sources. I look at the Pythagorean Notebooks, the *lex sacra* of Selinous, the funerary gold leaves and the Derveni Papyrus to find a common underlying pattern, featuring the survival of the soul after death, a division between those with a better and a worse fate after death, enforced by hostile divine powers, and an initiation ritual to neutralise these and secure for its adherents the better outcome.

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Illustrations

Abbreviations

DK	H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed. by W, Kranz (Berlin: 1951)
FGrH	F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Berlin/Leiden: 1823-58)
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*
JJK	M.H. Jameson, D.R. Jordan and R.D. Kotansky, *A Lex Sacra from* Selinous (Durham, NC: 1993)
KPT	T. Kouremenos, G.M. Parássoglou and K. Tsantsanoglou, *The Derveni Papyrus* (Firenze: 2006)
LSJ	H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English lexicon*, 9th ed. revised by H.S. Jones (Oxford: 1940)
OF	A. Bernabé, *Poetae epici Graeci: testimonia et fragmenta. Pars 2: Orphicorum et Orphicis similium testimonia et fragmenta.* 3 vols. (Munich/Berlin: 2004-7)
PGM	K. Preisendanz, *Papyri graecae magicae: die griechischen Zauberpapyri.* 2nd ed, rev. A. Henrichs. 2 vols. (Stuttgart: 1973)
PMG	D.L. Page, *Poetae melici Graecae* (Oxford: 1962)
SEG	*Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum*

For abbreviations of ancient authors and titles I follow the *Oxford classical dictionary* (4th ed., Oxford: 2012), supplemented by *LSJ*. Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

Introduction

1: Scope of this study

Greek religion, as is well known, was centred on the gods of Olympus and the heroes, together with the many myths told about them. Its practice was based on the festivals and sacrifices of the polis, together with a number of sanctuaries and oracles such as Delphi and Olympia of a wider scope. With the odd exception, such as the Eleusinian mysteries, it was not much concerned with the afterlife, what happens to us after death.

With this in mind, we may consider the following excerpts from contemporary sources:

> Beggar priests and seers go to the doors of the rich and persuade them that through sacrifices and incantations a power is provided them from the gods, either to remedy his own or his ancestors' misdeeds through feasts and enjoyment ... And they supply a din of books of Musaeus and Orpheus, descendants of the moon and the Muses, as they say, according to which they sacrifice, persuading not only individuals but even cities that there are releases and purifications for misdeeds through sacrifices and childish pleasures, when they are still living and also when they are dead, which rites

they call τελεταί, which free us from the evils there, while terrible things await those who do not sacrifice.[1]

When you became a man you read out the books while your mother performed the ceremony and you assisted with the other preparations. During the night you took the fawn skin, mixed the wine and purified the participants and wiped them with mud and bran and after the purification raised them up and told them to say 'I have escaped the bad and found the better' ... In the day you led the fine procession, garlanded with fennel and white poplar, through the streets, rubbing the *pareias* snakes and raising them above your head, and shouting '*euoi saboi*' and dancing to '*hues attes hues*'[2]

You will find in the halls of Hades a spring on the right, and standing by it, a glowing white cypress tree. Do not approach this spring at all. Further along you will find, from a lake of Memory, the refreshing water flowing forth. But guardians are nearby, and they will ask you for what need you have come; to them you should relate very well the whole truth. Say: 'I am the child of Earth and starry Heaven; starry is my name. I am parched with thirst, but give me to drink from the spring.'[3]

Pure I come from the pure, Queen of those below the earth, and Eukles and Eubouleus and the other immortal gods; for I also claim that I am of your blessed race. But fate mastered me and the thunderer, striking with his lightning. I flew out of the circle of wearying heavy grief; I came on with swift feet to the desired crown; I passed beneath the bosom of the Mistress, Queen of the Underworld. 'Happy and most blessed one, a god you shall be instead of a mortal.' A kid I fell into milk.[4]

For [Pythagoras] would clearly remind many of those he talked to of their former life, which their soul had once lived before it was bound to its present

[1] Pl. *Resp.* 364b-365a = *OF*573.

[2] Dem. 18.259-60 = *OF*577.

[3] Gold leaves B2 (Pharsalus, 4th century BC). Translation of Edmonds 2011b.

[4] Gold leaves A1 (Thurii, 4th century BC). Translation of Edmonds 2011b.

> body, and would show by irrefutable evidence that he himself had been Euphorbus, son of Panthus, conqueror of Patroclus.[5]
>
> Those from whom Persephone will receive the recompense of ancient grief, in the ninth year she gives back to the sun above; from these arise illustrious kings and men swift in strength and great in wisdom, and in the time to come they are called by men pure heroes.[6]
>
> For I should not wonder if Euripides did not speak the truth when he said 'Who knows if to live is to be dead and to be dead to live?', and we are perhaps really dead; for I once heard from the wise that we are dead now and the body is our tomb.[7]
>
> Prayers and offerings appease the souls, while the incantation of the magi is able to remove or change the hindering daimons; hindering daimons hostile to souls. For this reason, the magi make offerings, as if, as it were, paying an atonement. They pour on the offerings water and milk, from which they also make libations. The cakes they offer are countless and many-knobbed, for the souls too are countless. The initiates make preliminary offerings to the Eumenides in the same way the magi do, for the Eumenides are souls.[8]

The things they are describing are difficult to understand, and do not at all seem to fit into our standard picture of Greek religion. This study is an attempt to make sense of what they are saying.

In order to do this, I shall examine the topic of private initiation and the afterlife in classical Greece. In this introductory section I want to define these terms and explain what I am trying to prove, what sources I shall use and what will be the general approach and plan of the work.

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[5] Iambl. *VP* 63.

[6] Pind. fr. 133 = *OF*443.

[7] Pl. *Grg.* 492e-493a = *OF*430.

[8] *P. Derv.* col. VI. For alternative readings, see Chapter Seven section 5.

By classical Greece I mean the Greek world, including Greek settlements outside Greece itself, in approximately the fifth and fourth centuries BC. As I shall explain below, the evidence base will be somewhat wider than this. The phenomena that I am examining, as I hope will become apparent in the course of the investigation, seem to have emerged as something new during the fifth and fourth centuries, and, at least as far as we can tell, faded away in the subsequent years.

The English term 'initiation' is used in contemporary scholarship on the classical world with two different meanings.[9] The one with which I am concerned, of a ritual to enrol someone in a particular group, corresponds to the Greek μυέω. This is usually derived from μύω, 'to keep the eyes or mouth shut': μύσαντος ὄμματος, 'closed eye' (Eur. *Med.* 1183), χεῖλος ἔμυσε, 'my lip closed' (Antiphil. *Anth. Pal.* 7.630).[10] It would then refer to the characteristic secrecy of the ritual, best attested for initiation at Eleusis.[11] The word τελετή is also often translated as 'initiation', but is in fact used for a wide range of rites, including but not confined to initiation.[12]

From μυέω come μύστης, 'initiate', and μυστήρια, 'the mysteries'. μυέω and μυστήρια were rendered into Latin by Cicero as *initiare*, *initia*, from which we get the English and French 'initiation'. We also have from the nineteenth century the phrase 'mystery religion' (from the German *Mysterienreligion*), originally used for various Oriental cults in the time of the Roman Empire, which may have had the unfortunate effect of suggesting that the earlier

[9] There are clear explanations in Graf 2003: 4-8 and Bremmer 2014: vii-xi, which I follow here.

[10] Cosmopoulos 2015: 14-15. For an alternative derivation from the Hittite *munnae* see Bremmer 2014: vii-viii.

[11] Chapter Two section 5.

[12] Chapter One section 5.

Greek mysteries were a religion in the modern sense, which, as I shall argue, is not the case.

The term 'initiation' was also adopted by the eighteenth-century anthropologist Lafitau for what might be called rites of passage such as puberty rituals, and in this sense has been applied to corresponding rites of passage in ancient Greece which have no connection with initiation into the mysteries. I shall not be concerned with these here.

By private initiation I mean initiation performed by private individuals, that is freelance religious practitioners, for a fee. Its counterpart is initiation in a civic cult under the auspices of the polis, notably in the mysteries at Eleusis, which I shall consider briefly as a comparator to and example for the private rituals.[13]

The other half of my subject is the afterlife, or what happens to us after death. Initiation at Eleusis offered those who underwent it a better fate after they were dead, and it seems clear that this was characteristic of the private rituals also. It was obviously necessary for the initiators to give the initiands some kind of portrayal of what the afterlife might be like. The topics of initiation and the afterlife therefore naturally belong together.

The evidence for all this is scanty and difficult to interpret. Two prime sources are the gold leaves found in a number of tombs typically giving instructions for the soul after death, and the Derveni Papyrus, which includes accounts of various rituals and supernatural entities. Their importance lies in the fact that they come from the initiators themselves, or at least sources close to them, though their meaning has been much disputed. There are a number of references in the poets, philosophers and orators of the period, though they

[13] Chapter Two section 5.

are not necessarily either knowledgeable or sympathetic in their attitude. Plato, an especially rich source of information, poses particular problems of interpretation, which I shall address.

There is one significant inscription, from Selinous, but I have not found much of value in either pictorial or archaeological evidence. Earlier literary evidence, primarily Homer and Hesiod, has been useful in demonstrating the evolution of various concepts and the general state of understanding at the time. Evidence later than the period, though it may reflect what was current at an earlier time, I have used with caution. It is very difficult to disentangle, for example, what in major late Pythagorean sources such as Porphyry and Iamblichus was faithfully copied from lost works of the classical period which we know they did use and what was the result of Neopythagorean speculation many centuries later.[14] I have ignored the very late Neoplatonists unless there is warrant for their statements in the classical period, which is generally not the case.

[14] Riedweg 2005: 119-28.

2: Previous scholarship

Some aspects of this topic have been extensively studied in recent years. In nearly all cases, however, there has been no attempt to look at the private initiators and their views of the afterlife as a whole, but only to examine what I would see as particular parts of the subject.

Many studies are based on the assumption of the existence of different sects, such as Orphics, Bacchics or Pythagoreans. Among these, Orphism[15] has been both the most prominent and the most controversial. Two early works are still of great value: Rohde's *Psyche*, which raises many of the key questions and lists most of the relevant ancient sources in the chapter notes, and Linforth's detailed and sceptical study of all those sources that mention the name of Orpheus.[16] More recently, scholarly discourse has been dominated by the work of Bernabé and his pupils, who argue for the existence of an Orphic sect subscribing to an Orphic mythology first attested many centuries later in the late Neoplatonists.[17]

Edmonds, in opposition to this, has put forward a sceptical position and has tried, in my view convincingly, to show that there is not good evidence for either an Orphic group or this kind of Orphic myth at this time.[18] In general, however, Bernabé's case has been accepted by scholars, if often with some

[15] Chapter Two section 6.

[16] Rohde 1925, Linforth 1941.

[17] Bernabé 2004-07 and many articles (see Bibliography); also see, for example, the collections Bernabé and Casadesús 2008, Bernabé, Casadesús and Santamaría 2010, Bernabé, Kahle and Santamaría 2011, Borgeaud 1991, Herrero de Jáuregui 2011, Bernabé [et al.] 2013.

[18] Edmonds 1999, 2013 and a number of other articles; see also Torjussen 2010 who takes a similar view.

reservations.[19] This Orphism is usually linked, on the basis of the name, with the *orpheotelests* mentioned by Theophrastus (*Char.* 16), and frequently also with the beggar priests and prophets described by Plato (*Resp.* 364b),[20] who it is assumed are the same and are in effect priests of the Orphic religion.

Another difficult to define group, the Pythagoreans, has sometimes been linked with initiation and associated theories of the afterlife, especially metempsychosis.[21] Groups of Bacchics, or followers of Dionysus, have also been posited, though it is often supposed that these are the same as the Orphics ('Orphic-Bacchics'), because of the prominence of Dionysus in late Orphic myth.[22] Public initiation at Eleusis has of course been studied,[23] and there have been several useful surveys of mysteries in general, mostly structured with a chapter to each cult, rather than a comparative approach[24]

A great deal of work focuses upon individual sources. The Derveni Papyrus[25] has attracted much interest since its discovery in 1962. There have been

[19] See e.g. West 1983: 170-1, Parker 1995: 496, Most 1997: 131-2, Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 127, Bremmer 2014: 56-70.

[20] Chapter One sections 4-5.

[21] Zuntz 1971 makes a connection to the gold leaves. Burkert 1972 is still the basic study of the Pythagoreans; for more recent work, see Zhmud 2012 and the collections of Cornelli, McKirahan and Macris 2013 and Huffman 2014.

[22] Nilsson 1957a, Henrichs 1978, Cole 1980, Seaford 1981, Cazanove 1986, Bernabé [et al.] 2013.

[23] Mylonas 1961, Graf 1974 (linking it with Orphism), Clinton in many studies (see Bibliography), Cosmopoulos 2014, 2015. See Chapter Two section 5.

[24] Burkert 1987, which does attempt a comparative approach, Bowden 2010, Bremmer 2014; see also Cosmopoulos 2003, Casadio and Johnston 2009.

[25] Chapter Seven section 5.

several editions,[26] two monographs,[27] three collections[28] and many articles.[29] Some of this is related to the commentator's philosophical ideas, or to papyrological reconstruction of the text. Attempts to analyse what it can tell us of initiation and the afterlife normally, however, assume an Orphic context.

Three editions of the funerary gold leaves with commentary and studies have been published in recent years.[30] They are commonly referred to as 'Orphic' gold leaves, though they do not in fact mention either Orpheus or Orphics, and their content is difficult to reconcile with what is known from elsewhere of Orphic myth. Two of the forty or more refer to Dionysus, from which it is usually assumed that they all come from a Bacchic or Orphic-Bacchic sect.

Other relevant sources that have received attention include the Pythagorean Notebooks,[31] the *lex sacra* of Selinous,[32] the Olbia bone tablets,[33] and the

[26] [Anonymous] 1982, Janko 2002, Jourdan 2003, Betegh 2004, Bernabé 2004-07, Kouremenos, Parássoglou and Tsantsanoglou 2006, Laks and Most 2016, Kotwick 2017. See Appendix: The Derveni Papyrus: a note on the text.

[27] Betegh 2004, which concentrates on the philosophical aspects, and Piano 2016, which is mainly concerned with the earlier columns that I shall be examining here. There is also considerable relevant material relating to the theogony in West 1983 and Meisner 2018.

[28] Laks and Most 1997, Papadopoulou and Muellner 2014 and Santamaría 2019a.

[29] See, for example, those listed in the bibliography under Bernabé, Ferrari and Janko.

[30] Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, Edmonds 2011d, Graf and Johnston 2013; see also Zuntz 1971, Torjussen 2010 and various articles by especially Bernabé, Edmonds, Janko and Riedweg (see Bibliography) and Chapter Four below.

[31] The older studies of Delatte 1922 and Festugière 1945 have not been altogether replaced; for more recent work see Laks 2013, Long 2013.

[32] Jameson, Jordan and Kotansky 1993, Clinton 1996, Robertson 2010, Ianucci, Muccioli and Zaccarini 2015.

[33] West 1982, VInogradov 1991, Zhmud 1992.

Gurôb Papyrus.[34] Though these studies naturally do attempt to situate their subject in a wider context, each is basically focused on a single source.

This concentration on particular cults or sources has meant that there is no general treatment of the initiators. There are a couple of brief but suggestive papers by Burkert,[35] there are surveys of private religious practitioners other than initiators,[36] and there are incidental remarks in the references listed earlier in this section, of which only the magi of the Derveni Papyrus have given rise to a number of separate studies.[37]

The case is somewhat similar for the initiators' view of the afterlife, though the nature of two of the chief sources, the Derveni Papyrus and the gold leaves, has meant that this has attained greater prominence in studies of these areas. Bremmer's short survey of the afterlife in antiquity covers this period in sixteen pages.[38] There is some relevant work on the development of the concept of the soul,[39] and an important book by Johnston on those who have died prematurely or by violence.[40] Even on a topic such as metempsychosis, which is not clearly linked to a single cult or source, the last specialised book-length monograph was published seventy years ago.[41]

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[34] Hordern 2000.

[35] Burkert 1982, 1983.

[36] Dillery 2005, Eidinow 2017, Flower 2008, Johnston 2008; see Chapter One section 3.

[37] Such as Bernabé 2006, Calvo Martínez 2007, De Jong 1997, Russell 2001; see Chapter One section 6.

[38] Bremmer 2002.

[39] Claus 1981, Bremmer 1983, and see Chapter Two section 2.

[40] Johnston 1999. Sourvinou-Inwood 1995 is also useful.

[41] Long 1948; but see also McGibbon 1964, Casadio 1991, Obeyesekere 2002, Bernabé and Santamaría 2011, Bernabé 2013b and Chapter Five below.

Finally, there is the question of situating the initiators and their views of the afterlife within Greek religion as a whole. The once-dominant model of polis religion[42] has been modified in recent years,[43] driven by the difficulty of fitting various religious phenomena into the model, among which are the activities of the private initiators. In tandem with this, Rüpke and his collaborators have examined the concept of individuation, or the development of individual self-identity, which may provide a useful approach.[44] Neither have considered the initiators in much detail.

[42] Sourvinou-Inwood 2001a, 2001b, Parker 1996, 2005.

[43] Bremmer 2010, Eidinow 2011, 2015, Kindt 2012, 2015, Harrison 2015.

[44] Rüpke 2013, Waldner 2013. See Chapter One section 2.

3: Aims and structure of this study

I shall be examining the private initiators and their views of the afterlife as a whole, without assuming that they belong to any particular sect or cult. In fact, as will emerge throughout this study, they seem to have been much more freelance practitioners taking their tenets and practices from a wide variety of not always consistent sources, or in current terminology *bricoleurs*.[45] My approach will be based on a new examination of the primary sources. I shall also look at how the private initiators offered an alternative model to polis religion. While building on previous scholarship, I think that this fresh perspective will offer an original and more accurate picture of their role.

Other new conclusions that this investigation will produce include: a new analysis and assessment of the value of Plato's myths as evidence for alternative religious beliefs, a distinction between Dionysiac cult involving initiation and other forms, a re-assessment of the credibility of Demosthenes' account of Aeschines' mother, a modification of current accounts of daimons and Erinyes to show that characteristics such as bad daimons, personal daimons and daimons as souls of the dead were relatively late developments, and that the close connection of the Erinyes with blood kin killing did not exist before the tragedians, and that apparently disparate and unconnected sources such as the Pythagorean Notebooks, the *lex sacra* of Selinous, the funerary gold leaves and the Derveni Papyrus share a common underlying structure.[46]

[45] Lévi-Strauss 1962. The importance of *bricolage* in areas associated with private initiation has been suggested by, among others, Torjussen 2010, Edmonds 2013, Graf and Johnston 2013 and Meisner 2018.

[46] Plato: Chapter Two section 4, Chapter Five section 4; Dionysiac cult: Chapter Three; Aeschines' mother: Chapter Three section 8; daimons and Erinyes: Chapter Six; common structure: Chapters Seven-Eight.

Overall, I have tried to key my conclusions as closely as possible to the evidence and reduce conjecture and speculation to a minimum, though I have certainly not been able to eliminate them entirely. I do not wish to deny the validity of the opposite approach, which creates a more comprehensive and overarching picture by extrapolation from a few scattered pieces of evidence. There is the danger, however, of misplaced ingenuity fitting everything into a preconceived pattern, and so that we might end up with an apparently authoritative account which is at base just a construct of modern scholars.[47] I have preferred a more minimalist approach, and omitted anything that I do not believe can be justified from contemporary evidence.

I shall try to show that private initiators did exist and discuss what they might have been called, when and where they came into being, how they might have learned their craft, what kind of thing they might have done, their relation to other forms of religion such as polis religion or the cult of Dionysus and what views of the afterlife they and others might have held. I particularly want to demonstrate three propositions.

The first is that these initiators and initiands did not constitute a sect, that is, a coherent group with a distinctive structure, theology and practices, defining itself in opposition to other religious groups.[48] The concept of a sect

[47] An example of this approach: 'Each of the authors dealing with this myth presents a different aspect of the paradigm, but none of them adds elements incompatible with the reconstructed paradigm which has remained coherent through time. It must therefore reflect a religious movement covering many centuries. Besides Orphism, which other equally long-lasting candidates are there?' (Bernabé 2002: 401). This is only a valid argument on the assumptions that all the authors dealt with were giving partial accounts of a single myth, never attested in its entirety, and that there did exist a long-lasting movement called Orphism. These are both tenable hypotheses, but accepting their possibility does not amount to proof.

[48] Burkert 1982: 2-3, Riedweg 2005: 99-100; see Chapter One section 2 below.

developed in relation to Christianity,[49] and however appropriate it might be for monotheism it makes little sense in the context of ancient polytheistic religion, where each person might worship many different gods.[50] The widespread modern view that these people belonged to supposed groups of Orphics,[51] or Orphic-Bacchics or Pythagoreans is without any secure foundation.[52]

I shall use the term 'cult' in its original English meaning of 'a particular form of religious worship' (*Shorter Oxford*) or 'a system of religious beliefs and ritual' (*Merriam-Webster*). The cult of a particular divinity would then be some form of religious activity dedicated to that divinity, and to say that it received cult is to say that it was worshipped in some form. The term is now, however, often used to refer to a group, with a meaning similar to 'sect'; I shall not be using it in this sense.

The second proposition that I want to establish is related to this, that there was not a single coherent doctrine of the afterlife among the private practitioners, nor even a number of coherent competing doctrines. Instead, it appears that we are rather dealing with a patchwork or *bricolage* of

[49] αἵρεσις (*LSJ s.v.* B2), from which our 'heretic', originally a Hellenistic term for a philosophical school; Riedweg 2005: 98-9.

[50] Zhmud 2012: 165-8. Cf. Linforth 1941: 79, Edmonds 2008: 21, Bremmer 2010: 24, 28. Certainly this would be true for the Graeco-Roman world before the appearance of Mithraism under the Roman Empire.

[51] Chapter Two section 6.

[52] I consider the bacchics and the cult of Dionysus in Chapter Four. The latest monographic treatment of the Pythagoreans explicitly rejects the case for considering them as a sect (Zhmud 2012: 135-68), concluding that '[t]heir philosophical theories were highly individual; they never had any sacred scripture; and the contradictions in our sources concerning metempsychosis and the vegetarianism that was linked with it are so great that it is impossible to see them as binding dogmas of Pythagorean religion' (Zhmud 2012: 168).

overlapping concepts taken up, developed and combined by different people without much regard to consistency.

Thirdly, however, I shall argue that despite these superficial differences there is at a deeper level a common picture of the afterlife that differed significantly from that in conventional polis religion, apart from the Eleusinian mysteries. Its main features were the survival of the soul after death, a division between those with a better and a worse fate after death, enforced by some kind of hostile daimons, and an initiation ritual to neutralise the daimons and secure for its adherents the better outcome. I shall examine four disparate sources (the Pythagorean Notebooks, the *lex sacra* of Selinous, a funerary gold leaf and the Derveni Papyrus) to show how they all embody this common pattern.

I shall begin with the evidence for the private initiators themselves. They fit into a large group of private religious practitioners with various and overlapping names and functions, which are different from but exist alongside the mainstream religion of the polis. Three of these, the beggar priests (ἀγύρται), practitioners of Orphic rites (Ὀρφεοτελεστάι) and magi (μάγοι) will be considered in more detail for evidence of their activities, though with the possible exception of magi none is likely to be what they called themselves. I shall also look at parallels with the craft of medicine.

I then try to set a contextual framework for the initiators and their views of the afterlife in contemporary thought and society by reviewing the development of the concept of the soul and views on its immortality, the topography of the afterlife, especially of Hades and the Isles of the Blessed, the myths of Plato on the soul and the methodological problems of using them as evidence, the well-known public initiatory cult of Eleusis, which may have acted in some respects as a model for the private practitioners, and finally my

reasons for scepticism as to the existence at this period of any group, doctrine or religious movement that might be identified as Orphism.

In the next chapter, I shall go through the evidence for private initiation connected with the cult of Dionysus; it will be important to distinguish this from other forms of Dionysian cult, something which has perhaps not always been done. Surveying the evidence in roughly chronological order, I find the reliable evidence for this to date from the end of the fifth century onwards: the Hipponion gold leaf, a proverbial saying recorded by Plato, a polemical passage in Demosthenes and an edict and religious papyrus from fourth-century Egypt.

Following this I shall look at the funerary gold leaves as a group, and in particular at modern scholarly attempts to treat them as extracts from a single original. I shall conclude that the variations and inconsistencies between them are too many for this to be plausible, and that so far from representing a coherent and consistent secret doctrine they are in fact a much more random collection that have been copied and altered without much understanding of what the original meaning may have been.

One very distinctive doctrine concerning our fate after death that has often been linked to these initiators is metempsychosis, the transmigration of the soul to a reincarnation in a new body, which I consider in the fifth chapter. The belief was an uncommon one, and those that held it did not agree on many of the details. Much of our information comes from Plato, usually connected with his arguments that human beings are judged in the afterlife, but I shall try to show that what he tells us has very little evidential value. The concept of the body as the tomb or prison of the soul, often linked with metempsychosis, may well not be connected. The term ποινή, seen as significant for an Orphic

interpretation, has different meanings in the various contexts in which it occurs and cannot be shown to have a connection to late Orphic myth.

As a preliminary to the final part of my study, I shall survey in the sixth chapter the nature of beings known as daimons, in their various aspects: lesser divine beings, souls of the dead, personal daimons and bad daimons. Many of these aspects were not long-established, and do not appear in the evidence before Plato. The semi-divine beings known as Erinyes or Eumenides will be shown to have a wider function than that of avengers of blood-kin with which they are now generally associated.

The final two chapters will examine four very different sources for the afterlife: the Pythagorean Notebooks transmitted by Alexander Polyhistor, the *lex sacra* of Selinous, the funerary gold leaves of the B type and the sixth column of the Derveni Papyrus. In Chapter Seven I shall look at each individually to describe their nature and clear up preliminary problems of interpretation. Then in Chapter Eight I shall try to demonstrate that they all share a common underlying conception of the afterlife, in which souls survive after death and are divided into two classes, of which one, the initiates, has a better fate in the next world. The division was enforced by hostile daimons which were neutralised in the initiation process; these hostile daimons may themselves have been souls of the dead.

The picture of the private initiators and their views of the afterlife that will emerge from this investigation will be incomplete and uncertain in many respects. This is determined by the limitations of the evidence. I hope to have made a case that they were not any kind of sect or organised group and that they did not have a coherent and consistent doctrine of the afterlife, but that there was an underlying pattern to what they taught and practised that can be traced in sources of disparate origin.

Chapter One

Private initiators in classical Greece

1: Introduction

> καὶ κινδυνεύουσι καὶ οἱ τὰς τελετὰς ἡμῖν οὗτοι καταστήσαντες οὐ φαῦλοί τινες εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τῷ ὄντι πάλαι αἰνίττεσθαι ὅτι ὃς ἂν ἀμύητος καὶ ἀτέλεστος εἰς Ἅιδου ἀφίκηται ἐν βορβόρῳ κείσεται, ὁ δὲ κεκαθαρμένος τε καὶ τετελεσμένος ἐκεῖσε ἀφικόμενος μετὰ θεῶν οἰκήσει. εἰσὶν γὰρ δή, ὡς φασιν οἱ περὶ τὰς τελετάς, ‘ναρθηκοφόροι μὲν πολλοί, βάκχοι δέ τε παῦροι·’ οὗτοι δ᾽ εἰσὶν κατὰ τὴν ἐμὴν δόξαν οὐκ ἄλλοι ἢ οἱ πεφιλοσοφηκότες ὀρθῶς.
>
> (Pl. *Phd.* 69c-d = *OF*434, 576)

> And perhaps those who founded the sacred rites were not negligible people, but actually long ago expressed something symbolically when they said that those who go to Hades uninitiated without participating in the rites shall lie in mud, but those who arrive there purified having accomplished them shall live with the gods. For as those concerned with the rites say, ‘many bear the narthex, but the Bacchi are few’; these in my opinion are none other than the true philosophers.

Plato is here referring to people offering some kind of rites (τελεταί), which hold out to those who take part in them the prospect of a better fate after death. The initiated will live with the gods; the uninitiated will lie in mud. As is generally recognised, he is not referring to those who founded the Eleusinian

mysteries, but to people who celebrate some kind of Dionysiac rites, as shown by the allusion to Bacchi and to the narthex, the fennel reed crowned with ivy, or thyrsus, borne by the followers of Dionysus (*Fig. 6*). There is no trace of a state cult of this kind. These, then, are private practitioners providing a rite of initiation comparable to Eleusis that secures for the participant a better fate in the afterlife.

Plato is not really interested in these people, and after this passing reference tells us, here at any rate, no more about them. He goes on to his real subject, philosophy, with the ingenious but highly implausible suggestion that these initiators were really putting forward an allegory of the philosophical life. In this chapter I shall examine what evidence we have for the existence of these private initiators, and what terms might have been used to refer to them. As will become apparent, we do not know a great deal about them.

I want to start by considering their private status, and how they relate to the concept of polis religion. I shall try to define this, and to sketch an alternative model which might apply to the initiators. I shall then go on to try and characterise the environment in which they emerged by briefly describing some of the major, often overlapping, types of other private religious practitioners in the period.

I shall then examine three terms which might be taken to refer to these initiators, the beggar priest (ἀγύρτης), the celebrator of Orphic rites (ὀρφεοτελεστής) and the magus (μάγος). Relevant evidence will be found in Plato's *Republic* and in the Derveni Papyrus, but only magus is likely to be how they referred to themselves, and even this may be a special case. Finally in this chapter, I shall look at parallels with the medical profession and put forward the hypothesis that both were similar craft groups which might have

recruited through family inheritance and some kind of apprenticeship in a similar way.

2: An alternative to polis religion

The concept of polis religion was originally formulated by Sourvinou-Inwood as a comprehensive model of Greek religion in the classical era:[1] 'In the Classical period *polis* religion encompassed all religious activity within the *polis*'.[2] She saw it as embedded in the specific environment of the polis, so that it was not possible to treat it separately from the culture,[3] and believed that each significant grouping within the polis was articulated and given identity through cult, and that polis religion embodied, negotiated and informed all religious discourse.[4] Although she does express a slight doubt about whether what she describes as 'the ambiguous and uncertain exception of sectarian discourse' can be included in the model,[5] her basic position is that 'all cult acts, including those which some modern commentators are inclined to think of as "private", are religiously dependent on the *polis*'.[6]

In recent years, however, this model has been the subject of criticism by a number of scholars.[7] Attention has been drawn to a variety of religious phenomena which do not seem to fit easily in to the paradigm, including the consultation of oracles, epiphanic experiences, votive offerings, funerary

[1] Sourvinou-Inwood 2000a, 2000b (originally published 1988-90).

[2] Sourvinou-Inwood 2000b: 51.

[3] Kindt 2012: 15-16.

[4] Sourvinou-Inwood 2000a: 20, 27.

[5] Sourvinou-Inwood 2000a: 20.

[6] Sourvinou-Inwood 2000b: 51. On polis religion in Athens, see Parker 1996, 2005.

[7] Eidinow 2011, 2015, Kindt 2012, 2015, Rüpke 2013, Harrison 2015.

stelae, curse tablets and domestic cult.[8] We are perhaps moving to a new consensus, like that suggested by Eidinow, where polis religion is only one component, if an extremely important one, in a network of diverse religious identities.[9] In Kindt's formulation: 'Rather than speaking of polis religion, we may prefer to state that Greek religion was embedded in Greek culture with the polis as its paradigmatic worshipping group'.[10]

I shall be using the term 'polis religion' in this second sense, not as an all-inclusive model claiming to incorporate all religious manifestations in classical Greece, but simply as a shorthand for one form of religious activity, though certainly the most prominent one. This polis religion is primarily determined by the polis into which the participant is born, and the social grouping within that polis, it typically involves animal sacrifice, it takes place in public, its officiants have a recognised place in society and are drawn from the ordinary citizens, and it requires performance of the prescribed rituals rather than any kind of personal religious experience.

Two things should be made clear. First, that this is an abstract, theoretical, model, and in the real world, as you might expect, there were fuzzy margins. To take a couple of examples, itinerant specialists such as Lampon or Epimenides could be called in by the polis in emergency,[11] and the Eleusinian mysteries, which share many of the characteristics of non-polis religion, were very much part of Athenian civic life. Second, that though the other forms of religion that I shall be describing were significantly different, there was little sense of any opposition between the two. Individuals participated in both

[8] Kindt 2015: 36.

[9] Eidinow 2011: 31-5.

[10] Kindt 2012: 19.

[11] Dillery 2005: 195-7, Gagnė 2013: 312-20.

without perceiving any conflict between them.[12] It should be noted, though, that while non-polis religion was not infrequently referred to in pejorative terms, this was almost never true of the established civic cult.[13]

The revised model has not so far, however, given much more consideration to the private initiators than the original did. Harrison's survey of recent work advancing on the polis religion concept does not mention them.[14] There are some exceptions. Eidinow, applying social network theory to Greek religion, has examined what she calls, with two sets of quotation marks, ' The ' " Orphic " type ' '.[15] She characterises the practitioners as travelling operators who compete with each other, and their clients as having cult membership and belonging to groups which she identifies with the traditional Dionysiac *thiasoi*, competing with the polis for control over the network relationships.

An alternative approach is to consider these phenomena in the context of the development of individual self-identity. The individual, in this formulation, is no longer bound by traditional modes of religious expression, but has a range of options.[16] Rüpke has produced a heuristic model of ancient religious individuation,[17] which, however, is explicitly based on the Hellenistic and Roman periods, and is not altogether appropriate for classical Greece.[18] Waldner has developed the concept for the mystery cults, with a focus on

[12] '[U]na convivenza non polemica tra gruppi religiosi di vario tipo' (Piano 2016: 241).

[13] Parker 2005: 134.

[14] Harrison 2015.

[15] Eidinow 2011: 26-31.

[16] Rüpke 2013: 6-9.

[17] Rüpke 2013: 14-23.

[18] In, for example, the move away from a polis-based society and the rise of Christianity.

Eleusis and Hellenistic thiasoi and on how they are used in the Platonic tradition.[19] She believes that 'any kind of initiation also meant a socialization into the group of all those who were initiated into the same cult';[20] though the degree of integration of this group might differ from case to case, it might well form an alternative community to the polis or the family.

Both Eidinow and Waldner have therefore retained the idea of the initiates as a kind of sect, which I argue here is not an appropriate model. Bremmer, in his discussion of the mysteries and Orphism in relation to polis religion,[21] explicitly rejects the idea of an Orphic sect as at the least very improbable. He also doubts that they were the charlatans depicted by Plato, and sees them rather as the heirs of a tradition of wandering *Wundermänner* that includes Empedocles. This may be a more fruitful approach.

Building on some of the ideas of these scholars, I should like to suggest a new and more detailed characterisation of a type of religious activity in classical Greece offered by private initiators on an alternative model to polis religion:

(i) It is altogether optional and voluntary on the part of the participant. That is to say, it is not determined or at least suggested by the socio-political environment, in a way that, for example, taking part in civic festivals like the Anthesteria or sacrificing to local heroes or being one of the women cultivating the rooftop gardens of Adonis might be. Instead, even if it may of course be influenced by the example of others, it is entirely an individual decision.

(ii) Those who offer this religious experience do not have any role in the social or political structure because of it, in the way that priests of the

[19] Waldner 2013.

[20] Waldner 2013: 226.

[21] Bremmer 2010: 22-9.

established cults do. Instead, they are private practitioners working on their own account, for payment.

(iii) The practitioners are generally itinerant, rather than connected to a particular polis.[22] It is true that we know too little about the individuals concerned to be certain, and of course itinerant practitioners may have made extended stays in particular locations, but there is no indication that they were natives of the place where they were practising or that they had any personal connection to the polis.[23] They seem to have included both men and women, in contrast to the division between male and female officiants in polis religion.[24]

(iv) There was probably a greater emphasis on personal religious experience in the ritual, though this is an aspect where the evidence is very elusive. Plato, speaking of the bright beauty (κάλλος λαμπρόν), blessed sight (μακαρίαν ὄψιν) and happy visions (εὐδαίμονα φάσματα) of the world of ideas, uses the terminology of initiation at Eleusis (μυούμενοί τε καὶ ἐποπτεύοντες, *Phdr.* 250b-c), suggesting that this was an ecstatic experience.[25] The formulation of Aristotle, that they should experience rather than learn (τοὺς τελουμένους οὐ μαθεῖν τι δεῖν ἀλλὰ παθεῖν, fr. 15 Rose),[26] may be a little

[22] On the relation of itinerant religious practitioners to sacred space, see Herrero de Jáuregui 2015: 668-74.

[23] Eidinow 2011: 26-7 suggests that some practitioners were embedded in local communities, on the grounds that itineracy is not mentioned by Theseus in Euripides' *Hippolytus* (952-4 = *OF*627), and that the superstitious man of Theophrastus visits the Ὀρφεοτελεστής every month (*Char.* 16 = *OF*654). Theseus' invective is not meant as a comprehensive description, however, while even if the superstitious man went to the same person each time he might easily have been making an extended stay of some months or more.

[24] Section 8 below; Parker 2005: 270.

[25] Waldner 2013: 227-30.

[26] Waldner 2013: 231-3.

misleading, as instruction was not generally a part of polis religion, and we shall see an example of non-polis activity where it was emphasised.[27] The contrast is rather between performance and experience. There may also have been from time to time personal religious experience in the civic cults, but it was only the correct performance of the ritual that was expected.

(v) The motive of the participants was to gain a personal benefit for themselves, specifically a better fate after death.[28]

It should be clear that this model does not describe anything that could be called a sect. This is defined by Burkert as a minority group with an alternative lifestyle, regular meetings, communal property, authority deriving from a leader or a scripture, defining itself against its opponents and punishing apostates, with diachronic stability and local mobility.[29] However you adjust the details of this definition, there is not a close match. Crucially, the model does not include any idea of a coherent group.

With these considerations in mind, we can now go on to examine the evidence for private initiators in classical Greece.

[27] The Derveni Papyrus, section 6 below.

[28] Pausanias credits Orpheus with cures for diseases (νόσων τε ἰάματα, Paus. 9.30.4 = *OF*551), and Burkert, citing Mesopotamian parallels, has suggested that the recital of a theogony might be used for therapeutic purposes (Burkert 1982: 8; see also Obbink 1997: 50), which would be a further personal benefit. Evidence for this in Greece is, however, lacking (Edmonds 2013: 106-7).

[29] Burkert 1982: 2-3.

3: Varieties of religious specialist

I should like to start by setting the background with a survey of the different types of private religious specialist that existed at the time.[30] Three of these, the ἀγύρτης or beggar priest, the ὀρφεοτελεστής or celebrator of Orphic rites and the μάγος or magus will be reserved for separate treatment, as these are the most likely groups to contain the private initiators. There remain the μάντις or seer, the χρησμολόγος or dealer in oracles, the ἐπῳδός or chanter of incantations, the καθαρτής or purifier, the γόης or magician and the ψυχαγωγός or necromancer. One might indeed add others, such as the ἐξηγητής or interpreter of sacred matters, the προφήτης or expounder of the divine will, the φαρμακεύς or sorcerer with drugs, the θαυματοποιός or wonder worker and the ἐγγαστρίμυθος or belly-prophet.[31]

I here give a brief description of each of six of the main types. The suggested translations are only approximate, and we shall have to consider how far these are different names for the same people. Their number and variety should demonstrate that there was a favourable environment for the introduction of private initiators.

(i) *μάντις*

The μάντις, usually translated as seer, was a long-established term, appearing in Homer (Theoclymenus, *Od.* 15.223-81) and myth.[32] The root meaning may

[30] More general recent surveys include Dickie 2001, Dillery 2005, Flower 2008 and Johnston 2008.

[31] Dickie 2001: 12-14 (φαρμακεύς), 72-4 (θαυματοποιός), Dillery 2005: 170-1 (ἐξηγητής, προφήτης), Johnston 2008: 140 (ἐγγαστρίμυθος).

[32] Dillery 2005: 172-83.

be from the Indo-European *men, indicating a state of inspiration or mania.[33] There was a strong hereditary element, with many mantic families originating in Elis and the north-west Peloponnese.[34] It was also, however, considered a learnable skill,[35] elements of which came eventually to be put in writing.[36] Isocrates (19.5-7) recounts how one Thrasyllus inherited some books on divination (τάς τε βίβλους τὰς περὶ τῆς μαντικῆς) and by their means practised in many cities and accumulated a large fortune.[37]

They were important figures for armies going into battle,[38] and they seem also to have had a role in the founding of colonies.[39] Their core function seems to have been divination from the entrails of sacrificed animals and the flights of birds.[40] They are, however, criticised by a medical writer for inconsistency: some think a bird on the left was good, on the right bad, others the opposite (οἱ μάντιες τὸν αὐτὸν ὄρνιθα, εἰ μὲν ἀριστερὸς εἴη, ἀγαθὸν νομίζουσιν εἶναι, εἰ δὲ δεξιὸς, κακόν ... ἀλλ᾽ ἔνιοι τῶν μάντιων τἀναντία τουτέων, Hippoc. *Acut.* 8). Their range of skills was wider than this, however: according to Plutarch (*Per.* 6.2-4), Lampon the μάντις predicted the rise of Pericles from the appearance of a one-horned ram, and in Xenophon they recommend purification of the army (*An.* 5.7.35) and sacrifices to calm the winds (*An.* 4.5.4).[41] When Aeschylus describes Apollo as 'a healing seer and reader of

[33] Dillery 2005: 169, Flower 2008: 23; cf. Plato, *Phileb.* 44c.

[34] Dillery 2005: 184, Flower 2008: 37-50.

[35] Bowden 2003: 257-60, Johnston 2008: 110-16.

[36] Dillery 2005: 221-3, Flower 2008: 51-3.

[37] I discuss Thrasyllus further in section 7 below.

[38] Dillery 2005: 200-9, Johnston 2008: 116-18.

[39] Dillery 2005: 193-4.

[40] Bowden 2003: 257-60, Johnston 2008: 125-32.

[41] Flower 2015: 304.

portents and purifier of homes for others' (ἰατρόμαντις δ᾽ ἐστὶ καὶ τερασκόπος καὶ τοῖσιν ἄλλοις δωμάτων καθάρσιος, *Eum.* 62-3), he may be reflecting what was expected of a mortal seer.[42]

(ii) *χρησμολόγος*

The χρησμολόγος was a dealer in oracles.[43] The term first appears in Herodotus, and seems to have reached its high point in fifth century Athens.[44] It can mean a speaker of oracles, a collector of oracles or an interpreter of oracles.[45] Onomacritus, an Athenian χρησμολόγος, was said to have edited, and occasionally forged, the oracles of Musaeus, and subsequently appeared at the court of Xerxes, reciting such oracles as were favourable to the Persians (Hdt. 7.6.3-4). In the famous wooden wall oracle at the time of the Persian invasion, the Athenians preferred the interpretation of Themistocles to that of the professional χρησμολόγοι (ταύτῃ Θεμιστοκλέος ἀποφαινομένου Ἀθηναῖοι ταῦτα σφίσι ἔγνωσαν αἱρετώτερα εἶναι μᾶλλον ἢ τὰ τῶν χρησμολόγων, Hdt. 7.143.3).[46]

(iii) ἐπῳδός

The ἐπῳδός was a chanter of incantations.[47] They were used medically, along with purifications (καθαρμοῖσί τε χρέονται καὶ ἐπαοιδῇσι, *Morb. sacr.* 1), much to the annoyance of the doctors, who considered this impious; Plato also

[42] Flower 2008: 27.

[43] Bowden 2003 and Dillery 2005 have comprehensive treatments.

[44] Dillery 2005: 184-5, 220.

[45] Bowden 2003: 261.

[46] Bowden 2003: 272-4, Dillery 2005: 209-19.

[47] Dickie 2001: 12-14, 24, 71.

is critical of those who try to bewitch the gods with sacrifices, prayers and incantations (θυσίαις τε καὶ εὐχαῖς καὶ ἐπῳδαῖς γοητεύοντες, *Leg.* 909b = *OF*573).

(iv) καθαρτής

The καθαρτής was a purifier.[48] Purification was used in medical contexts as a remedy for diseases such as epilepsy (*Morb. sacr.* 1 = *OF*657). Indeed, the same term, κάθαρσις, was used both for religious purification and for physical evacuations from the body.[49] It was also used for mental illness, the afflicted one (τῷ ὀρθῶς μανέντι) being treated with purifications and religious rites (καθαρμῶν τε καὶ τελετῶν, Pl. *Phdr.* 244d = *OF*575). It may have developed as a specialisation of the role of healer-seer (ἰατρόμαντις) that we find in Homer and Hesiod (*Il.* 1.93-100, Hes. fr. 37.14 MW).[50] Whole cities could be purified as well as individuals, as when Epimenides purified Athens from the Cylonian curse (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 1, Plut. *Sol.* 12).[51]

Methods included washing, of course, the use of substances such as sulphur, gold, laurel, buckthorn, squill, blood and mud, and the use of animals to receive the impurity.[52] Demosthenes, describing what seems to be a kind of fictitious composite rite,[53] has the participants first washed, then scoured with mud and bran (ἀπομάττων τῷ πηλῷ καὶ τοῖς πιτύροις, 18.259 = *OF*577). Incantations might also be employed, as we know from the allegation that the

[48] Parker 1983: 207-34.

[49] Lloyd 1979: 44.

[50] Parker 1983: 209-10.

[51] Burkert 1972: 150-2, Bernabé 2004-7: iii.119-21.

[52] Parker 1983: 212-13, 224-34.

[53] See below Chapter Three section 8.

philosopher Epicurus would in his youth accompany his mother to cottages and there read purifications (καθαρμοὺς ἀναγιγνώσκειν, D.L. 10.4). Parker suggests that by at least the fourth century the καθαρτής was generally held in low esteem,[54] but it is not clear that his evidence altogether supports this.[55]

(v) γόης

The γόης, or sorcerer, a hostile designation rather than one used by the practitioners themselves, was primarily concerned with what we might call magic.[56] The derivation is perhaps from γοάω, to groan or lament, especially over the dead.[57] They were associated with deception and illusion, as we see from numerous references in Plato, for example 'Is it not clear that [the sophist] is one of the γόητες, an imitator of what is real?' (σαφές, ὅτι τῶν γοήτων ἐστί τις, μιμητὴς ὢν τῶν ὄντων, *Soph.* 235a).[58]

Among the activities that can reasonably be ascribed to the γόης are the production of the curse tablets that appear from the sixth century in Magna Graecia and from the fifth century in Attica.[59] They also left moulded wax

[54] Parker 1983: 207-8.

[55] In his examples from comedy, purification as an empty (κενὸν) remedy for hypochondria (Men. *Phasm.* 52-3) does not seem to me to imply that it might not be effective against a real disease, and the burlesque in Diphilus (fr. 126) does not of course imply any disrespect for what is burlesqued; the special case of the Hippocratic *De morbo sacro*, where the hostility is due to professional rivalry, is dealt with below (Section 7). As Parker himself points out, purification is referred to with respect by Sophocles (fr. 34) and even if the title of Empedocles' *Katharmoi* may not be due to the author himself (Wright 1995: 86), its use by whoever assigned it can hardly be intended as pejorative.

[56] Edmonds 2008: 23-7 examines ancient Greek magic from both an etic and an emic perspective.

[57] Dickie 2001: 12-13, Johnston 1999: 112.

[58] See also *Euthyd.* 288b, *Menex.* 235a, *Resp.* 380d, 584a, *Soph.* 234c, 241b, *Stat.* 291c, 303c.

[59] Bremmer 2010: 16-22.

images (κήρινα μιμήματα πεπλασμένα, Pl. *Leg.* 933b) in doorways and at crossroads and tombs. They claimed to be able to influence the weather, inducing storms and droughts, darkening the sun and bringing down the moon (σελήνην τε καθαιρέειν καὶ ἥλιον ἀφανίζειν καὶ χειμῶνά τε καὶ εὐδίην ποιέειν καὶ ὄμβρους καὶ αὐχμοὺς, Hippoc. *Morb. sacr.* 1). Others claimed to be able to prolong life (παρεκτρέποντες ὀχετὸν ὥστε μὴ θανεῖν, Eur. *Supp.* 1011). They convinced not only those who employed them, but also their victims that they could cause injury through bewitchment (ὡς παντὸς μᾶλλον ὑπὸ τούτων δυναμένων γοητεύειν βλάπτονται, Pl. *Leg.* 932e).

The γόης are sometimes linked with mystery initiations. Ephorus in the fourth century said they practised incantations, rites and mysteries (ὑπάρξαντας δὲ γόητας ἐπιτηδεῦσαι τάς τε ἐπωιδὰς καὶ τελετὰς καὶ μυστήρια, FGrHist 70 F 104).[60] This may, however, be no more than the application of an abusive term to the initiators.

(vi) ψυχαγωγός

The ψυχαγωγός was a necromancer who raised the dead to serve as an oracle.[61] There were public νεκυομαντεῖα,[62] but also private practitioners. Plato criticises those who claim to raise the dead (τοὺς δὲ τεθνεῶτας φάσκοντες ψυχαγωγεῖν) for money (χρημάτων χάριν, *Leg.* 909b = *OF*573). The Spartans sent for ψυχαγωγοί from Italy to deal with the ψυχή of Pausanias (Thuc. 1.34, Plut. *De sera* 560e-f). Empedocles claimed he could empower someone to 'lead from Hades the life-force of a dead man' (ἄξεις δ' ἐξ Ἀίδαο

[60] Johnston 1999: 105-11. Cf. Strabo's description of Orpheus as an ἄνδρα γόητα involved with τῶν περὶ τὰς τελετὰς ὀργιασμῶν (7a.1.18); τελετή may or may not mean initiation here rather than rites in general (see section 5).

[61] Johnston 1999: 21-3, 29, 62-3, 81, Bremmer 2002: 76.

[62] Hdt. 1.46, 49, 5.92, 8.134.

καταφθιμένου μένος ἀνδρός, DK31B111). A Dodona tablet records a question to the oracle about the advisability of the questioner hiring Dorios the ψυχαγωγός.[63]

So far, we have been assuming that μάντις, χρησμολόγος and so on were each the names of separate groups with different functions. Were they perhaps, however, just different ways of referring to the same group of people, or at least referring to different functions which one person could combine? There is some evidence to support this.

μάντις was clearly the most prestigious and respected term, and tended to be the description of choice for the practitioners themselves.[64] χρησμολόγος was very close to μάντις.[65] The same person can be called a 'sacrificer and χρησμολόγος and μάντις' (ὁ δὲ Λάμπων θύτης ἦν καὶ χρησμολόγος καὶ μάντις, schol. Ar. *Av.* 521), and the Athenians after Sicily were angry at both (ὠργίζοντο δὲ καὶ τοῖς χρησμολόγοις τε καὶ μάντεσι, Thuc. 8.1.1), as if they were much the same. A distinction, however, appears to be drawn by Aristophanes:

> *Οἰκέτης*: ὡς ἀλαζὼν φαίνεται: μάντις τίς ἐστιν.
> *Τρυγαῖος*: οὐ μὰ Δί᾽ ἀλλ᾽ Ἱεροκλέης οὗτός γέ πού 'σθ᾽ ὁ χρησμολόγος οὐξ Ὠρεοῦ.
>
> (*Pax* 1046-7)

> He looks like a charlatan; he is some μάντις. No indeed, it's Hierocles, the χρησμολόγος from Oreus.[66]

[63] Evangelides #23 = Christides, Dakaris and Vokotopoulou 1999: no. 4.

[64] Flower 2015: 299-301.

[65] Bowden 2003: 261-4 thinks they that were usually the same, Dillery 2005: 170-1 that they were usually different.

[66] I am not convinced by Bowden's attempt to explain this away (Bowden 2003: 263).

Pausanias says that only some μάντεις, inspired by Apollo, were χρησμολόγοι (χωρὶς δὲ πλὴν ὅσους ἐξ Ἀπόλλωνος μανῆναι λέγουσι τὸ ἀρχαῖον, μάντεών γ᾽ οὐδεὶς χρησμολόγος ἦν, 1.34.4).

As for the other terms, ἐπῳδοί were probably medical in origin, as I suggested above, but later they are often associated with other groups, as in the examples in (iii) above (καθαρτής and γόης, *Morb. sacr.* 1 = *OF*657, Pl. *Leg.*909b = *OF*573), or, again with γόης, in Euripides (ἆρ᾽ οὐκ ἐπῳδὸς καὶ γόης πέφυχ᾽ ὅδε;, *Hipp.* 1038). The ψυχαγωγός was very close to the γόης; the Suda in fact defines γοητεία as 'to bring up a corpse through invocation' (ἀνάγειν νεκρὸν δι᾽ ἐμικλήσεως, *Suda s.v.* γοητεία).[67] Johnston indeed proposes that the γόης was originally just a ψυχαγωγός,[68] but produces little evidence for this.

There was clearly a great deal of latitude over whether a particular person was called, for example γόης, μάγος, ἐπῳδός, ψυχαγωγός, ἀγύρτης or φαρμακεύς.[69] These were often pejorative terms;[70] we do not know what the practitioners called themselves, perhaps something more respectable like μάντις. Plato (OF573) proposes punishments for those μάντεις (*Leg.* 908d) who claim to raise the dead (ψυχαγωγεῖν, 909b) or bewitch by incantations (ἐπῳδαῖς γοητεύοντες, 909b),[71] which does suggest that practitioners of arts beyond those of the traditional μάντις were adopting the term.

[67] For a sceptical view of this definition, see Dickie 2001: 12-13.

[68] Johnston 1999: 103-5.

[69] Dickie 2001: 12-14, Johnston 1999: 103-5, 111-18.

[70] See for example (v) above for γόης and sections 4 and 6 below for ἀγύρτης and μάγος; the evidence, however, may be skewed by Plato's consistent hostility.

[71] Flower 2015: 301.

The most likely conclusion is that the terminology was very fluid, and that the different names sometimes related to different persons, sometimes to different functions of the same person, and sometimes were simply used as synonyms, perhaps with more or less negative overtones.

This necessarily brief and selective survey should have demonstrated the range of private religious practitioners in fourth- and fifth-century Greece. Clearly there was a considerable overlap of both terminology and function between the different specialists. In terms of the model put forward in the previous section, they are voluntary and private in the sense there defined, probably also itinerant and offer personal benefits to their clients; what kind of religious experience they offered is uncertain. Although some, such as the γόης, were considered disreputable, and Plato is generally disapproving of the whole tribe, they were normally tolerated. Ninos, a priestess who was put to death for making charms for the young men (φίλτρα ποιούσης τοῖς νέοις, schol. Dem. 19.281) and Theoris, a sorceress (φαρμακίδα, Dem. 25.79), also executed, are odd exceptions.

This kind of environment was fertile ground for the appearance of private initiators, to whose traces we now turn.

4: Beggar priests

Private initiators seem to be identified as ἀγύρται, or beggar priests, in a passage of Plato's *Republic* (*OF*431, 434, 573) which requires detailed analysis.[72]

In this passage Adeimantus takes up the discussion (362e-367e). He begins by explaining the arguments, in his opinion erroneous, that people normally use in favour of justice. Among these are a better fate in the afterlife:

> Μουσαῖος δὲ τούτων νεανικώτερα τἀγαθὰ καὶ ὁ ὑὸς αὐτοῦ παρὰ θεῶν διδόασιν τοῖς δικαίοις: εἰς Ἅιδου γὰρ ἀγαγόντες τῷ λόγῳ καὶ κατακλίναντες καὶ συμπόσιον τῶν ὁσίων κατασκευάσαντες ἐστεφανωμένους ποιοῦσιν τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον ἤδη διάγειν μεθύοντας, ἡγησάμενοι κάλλιστον ἀρετῆς μισθὸν μέθην αἰώνιον ... τοὺς δὲ ἀνοσίους αὖ καὶ ἀδίκους εἰς πηλόν τινα κατορύττουσιν ἐν Ἅιδου καὶ κοσκίνῳ ὕδωρ ἀναγκάζουσι φέρειν
>
> (Pl. *Resp.* 363c-d)

> Musaeus and his son give good things more dashing than these from the gods to the just, for in their account they lead them to Hades and set them garlanded on couches and prepare a drinking party of the hallowed and make them drunk for eternity, believing the finest reward of virtue to be perpetual drunkenness ... but the impious and unjust they sink in mud in Hades and force them to carry water in a sieve

Musaeus was a legendary prophet associated with Orpheus; it is not clear who Plato meant by his son.[73] Although we are here presented with a better and worse fate in the afterlife, there is no question of gaining this through initiation, but only through having led a just or unjust life on earth. The characterisation of the better fate as perpetual drunkenness seems to be a

[72] Previous analyses include Linforth 1941: 76-91, Andueza Pèrez 2010.

[73] Linforth 1941: 85-9, Bernabé 2004-7: iii.1-53.

hostile account by Plato; very likely the original represented it as a pleasant and civilised symposium with wine, conversation and music.[74] The mud and the sieve appear elsewhere as post-mortem punishments.[75]

Adeimantus goes on to cite a different argument that is current, that injustice is more profitable than justice (λυσιτελέστερα δὲ τῶν δικαίων τὰ ἄδικα, 364a), and that the gods often reward the wicked rather than the good. As an illustration of this he says:

> ἀγύρται δὲ καὶ μάντεις ἐπὶ πλουσίων θύρας ἰόντες πείθουσιν ὡς ἔστι παρὰ σφίσι δύναμις ἐκ θεῶν πoριζομένη θυσίαις τε καὶ ἐπῳδαῖς, εἴτε τι ἀδίκημά του γέγονεν αὐτοῦ ἢ προγόνων, ἀκεῖσθαι μεθ᾽ ἡδονῶν τε καὶ ἑορτῶν, ἐάν τέ τινα ἐχθρὸν πημῆναι ἐθέλῃ, μετὰ σμικρῶν δαπανῶν ὁμοίως δίκαιον ἀδίκῳ βλάψει ἐπαγωγαῖς τισιν καὶ καταδέσμοις, τοὺς θεούς, ὥς φασιν, πείθοντές σφισιν ὑπηρετεῖν.
>
> (Pl. *Resp.* 364b-c)

> Beggar priests and seers go to the doors of the rich and persuade them that through sacrifices and incantations a power is provided them from the gods, either to remedy his own or his ancestors' misdeeds through feasts and enjoyment, and if he wants to hurt an enemy, just or unjust, for little expense through spells and binding curses he will do him harm, making, they say, the gods their assistants.

The subjects of this passage are described as 'ἀγύρται and μάντεις', which might mean two different groups or might be two words for the same group. We have seen in the preceding section that μάντις was a respectable description whose functions of advising armies and states by inspection of

[74] There is a reference in comedy to unlimited wine in the underworld (here, oddly, Tartarus); Pherecrates fr. 113 K.-A. = *OF*432 (cf. Ar. fr. 504 K.-A.). This is discussed by Ferrari (2011c: 98-103), though his conclusion that wine would not be enjoyed by initiates after death seems influenced by his assumptions that initiates are Orphic and Orphics are ascetic. Edmonds suggests a reading of gold leaf B1 in which the fortunate soul will celebrate (ἀνάξεις) festivals (Edmonds 2011c).

[75] Sieve: Pl. *Grg.* 492e-493c; mud: Pl. *Phd.* 69c-d, D.L. 6.2.39 = *OF*435, Ar. *Ran.* 145-51 (dung). See Graf 1974: 103-7, Fabiano 2010.

entrails and the flight of birds are very different to what is described here. The likely explanation is that the ἀγύρται and μάντεις are the same people, ἀγύρτης being a hostile description and the more prestigious μάντις what they preferred to call themselves. Cassandra in Aeschylus says she has been called an ἀγύρτρια (*Ag.* 1273) and a pretended μάντις (ψευδόμαντις, *Ag.* 1195) who knocks at doors (θυροκόπος, *Ag.* 1195).[76]

Two things are offered by them, obviously for money as it is the rich they target. The first is a painless method of freeing their clients from the consequences of their own and their forbears' unjust deeds. We are not told here what these consequences might be, or whether they relate to this world or to the afterlife. The second is the use of spells and curses to injure their enemies, the kind of activity we have identified as characteristic of the γόης.

After quoting passages from Hesiod and Homer that he says these practitioners use to support their case, Adeimantus proceeds as follows:

> βίβλων δὲ ὅμαδον παρέχονται Μουσαίου καὶ Ὀρφέως, Σελήνης τε καὶ Μουσῶν ἐκγόνων, ὥς φασι, καθ᾽ ἃς θυηπολοῦσιν, πείθοντες οὐ μόνον ἰδιώτας ἀλλὰ καὶ πόλεις, ὡς ἄρα λύσεις τε καὶ καθαρμοὶ ἀδικημάτων διὰ θυσιῶν καὶ παιδιᾶς ἡδονῶν εἰσι μὲν ἔτι ζῶσιν, εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ τελευτήσασιν, ἃς δὴ τελετὰς καλοῦσιν, αἳ τῶν ἐκεῖ κακῶν ἀπολύουσιν ἡμᾶς, μὴ θύσαντας δὲ δεινὰ περιμένει.
>
> (Pl. *Resp.* 364e-365a)

> And they supply a din of books of Musaeus and Orpheus, descendants of the moon and the Muses, as they say, according to which they sacrifice, persuading not only individuals but even cities that there are releases and purifications for misdeeds through sacrifices and childish pleasures, when they are still living and also when they are dead, which rites they call τελεταί, which free us from the evils there, while terrible things await those who do not sacrifice.

[76] Dickie 2001: 63-4. See also section 3 above on alternative names for these practitioners.

Are these people with the books still the same as the beggar priests and seers referred to in the earlier section? Linforth, followed by Andueza Pérez, thought they must be different.[77] They seem to have been influenced, however, by a feeling that the spiritual followers of Orpheus cannot have been the same as the low-life peddlers of curses. There is in fact nothing to show that they are different, and indeed they are both described in quite similar terms as offering remedies for misdeeds (ἀδίκημα) that are pleasurable (ἡδονῶν).[78] Quite likely Plato is presenting a composite picture combining everything that these itinerant practitioners might offer, but there is nothing to indicate that the same person might not have both curse tablets and some kind of books.

It is not clear exactly what would be in the books, or what is meant by saying that they sacrifice according to them (καθ᾽ ἃς θυηπολοῦσιν).[79] They may be mythological texts like that commented on in the Derveni Papyrus,[80] but it is difficult to see how this could be a guide to liturgical procedure. The more miscellaneous content of something like the Gurôb Papyrus[81] might seem more likely, but we can only guess. The reference to purifications (καθαρμοὶ) and the extension from individuals to cities would seem to include καθαρταί and figures like Epimenides, the purifier of Athens.[82] Presumably the purifiers

[77] Linforth 1941: 90-1, Andueza Pérez 2010: 363-4.

[78] Linforth: 1941: 80, Andueza Pérez 2010: 366-71.

[79] Linforth 1941: 79.

[80] Below Chapter Seven section 5.

[81] Chapter Three section 10.

[82] Cf. a Hippocratic reference to those who interpret dreams that foretell good and bad to either cities or individuals (προσημαίνει ἢ πόλεσιν ἢ ἰδιώτῃσιν ἢ κακὰ ἢ ἀγαθὰ, *Vict.* 4.87).

of cities did not get custom by going round knocking on doors, which confirms that this is a composite picture.

It is now made explicit that the purpose of these expiations is to secure a better fate in the afterlife, which must certainly be the meaning of 'there' (ἐκεῖ). Terrible things (δεινά) await everyone else. There is a dubious etymology in the Platonic manner[83] implied between τελευτήσασιν, the dead, and τελετὰς, rites or initiations.[84] The phrase εἰσι μὲν ἔτι ζῶσιν, εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ τελευτήσασιν, 'either still living or also dead', is ambiguous: it may mean (a) that the same persons benefit both before and after death, or (b) that even those who are already dead can be saved posthumously by their descendants.[85] The conclusion, however, that 'terrible things await those who do not sacrifice' (μὴ θύσαντας δὲ δεινὰ περιμένει), refers only to the fate of those actually sacrificing, which makes (a) seem more likely.

What relation does this hold to the earlier account (363c-d) of a better fate after death offered by Musaeus? That reserved this better fate to the just; here by contrast it is available to anyone for a suitable fee. They may be variant versions offered by different people. It would be difficult, however, to see what the role of the practitioner with the book might be in the first version, where the just benefited; it would be simply up to you to live a good and virtuous life. Plato, as we shall see when we discuss metempsychosis,[86] does tend to project his own concern with justice into his references to these matters, so perhaps he has introduced it here too and therefore the initiation

[83] Chapter Five section 6 below.

[84] Section 5 below for further discussion of this term.

[85] For (a): Linforth 1941: 80-2, Guthrie 1952: 214-25, Edmonds 2013b: 214-15n50. For (b): Rohde 1925: 358-9n66, Johnston 1999: 53-4, Graf 2011: 61-2.

[86] Chapter Five section 4.

version is the more authentic one. The connection with justice in the first version would also be necessary to fit in with Adeimantus' argument at that point about the popular reasons for being just.

Can we at least identify the persons offering this as being called ἀγύρται? We do not know a great deal about this group from other sources.[87] The word is derived from ἀγείρω, to collect; Odysseus is said in Homer to collect wealth (χρήματ' ἀγυρτάζειν, *Od.* 19.284). There are few extant references to ἀγύρται in the classical period apart from this in Plato, and all stress their poverty and low status. They are wretched starving beggars (πτωχὸς τάλαινα λινοθνὴς, Aesch. *Ag.* 1274), deceitful (δόλιον, Soph. *OT* 388), dressed like beggars (πτωικὴν ἔχων στολὴν, [Eur.] *Rhes.* 503), with squalid dirty heads (ψαφαρόχρουν κάρα πολυπινές, [Eur.] *Rhes.* 716), and are associated with μάγοι and καθάρται and vagrant charlatans (ἀλαζόνες, Hippoc. *Morb. sacr.* 1). Aristotle contrasts them with the torch-bearer of Eleusis: both have to do with the gods, but the torch-bearer is honourable, the other dishonourable (ἄμφω γὰρ περὶ θεόν, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν τίμιον τὸ δὲ ἄτιμον, *Rh.* 1405a). They are the butt of the comic poets.[88] An anecdote is told of the tyrant Dionysius of Syracuse ending his days as one of these, clearly representing the ultimate degradation.[89]

As time went by, the ἀγύρτης came to be identified with one particular cult as the eunuch priest of Cybele, the Mother goddess, often with the term μητραγύρτης or μηναγύρτης, or in Latin *gallus*.[90] They also had a low

[87] Eidinow 2017: 256-60 surveys the use of the term in Greek.

[88] Cratinus fr. 62, Eubulus fr. 57, and *Ἀγύρτης* or a variant as titles of plays by Antiphanes, Philemon and Menander.

[89] Clearchus fr. 47 Wehrli = Ath. 541e (12.58) = FHG II 307; Dickie 2001: 64.

[90] Roller 1999: 163-8, 229-32, Dickie 2001: 64, Martín Hernandez 2006: 79-81.

reputation.[91] These eunuch priests are not clearly attested before the fourth century,[92] though Cratinus in the fifth century refers to an ἀγερσικύβηλις, which seems to be a pun on Κυβέλη, Cybele, and κύβηλις, axe (fr. 62).

Can we say then that the private initiators were known as ἀγύρται, or was this just a term of abuse attached to them by Plato? The following considerations seem relevant:

(a) The term is only used once by Plato in what is a fairly extended passage. I have already observed that his account seems to be a composite picture, combining the activities of a number of different people.

(b) There is no connection with initiation made in any of the other extant references of the period.

(c) The name seems clearly to imply that they lived by begging, whereas the initiators charged fees for their services.

(d) It would seem surprising that the rich might be convinced to trust practitioners who are universally described as dirty, ragged and disreputable.

(e) Plato is clearly hostile to the people he describes, and might well have used a term of abuse.

The balance of probability, therefore, must be that ἀγύρτης is only used as a derogatory term, and has no particular connection to initiators.

[91] See e.g. *Anth. Pal.* 6.217-20, 234, 237.

[92] Roller 1999: 163-8.

What we have learnt from this passage, however, is that there were indeed initiators, whatever they were called, who offered for a fee to procure for their clients a better fate in the next life: 'releases and purifications for misdeeds through sacrifices and childish pleasures, when they are still living and also when they are dead, which rites they call τελεταί, which free us from the evils there, while terrible things await those who do not sacrifice'. They backed up their claims by writings ascribed to legendary figures. It may be that in some cases the better fate was specified as a pleasant and civilised symposium, and the worse as lying in mud or carrying water in a sieve.

5: Orphic initiators

A name frequently met with in scholarship for these private initiators is Orpheotelest or *orpheotelestes* (Ὀρφεοτελεστής), 'celebrator of Orphic rites', or as it is sometimes rendered, 'Orphic initiator'. Some representative quotations:

> 'These professional initiators ... had a special name from their calling, *Orpheotelestai*.' (Guthrie)[93]
>
> 'Los oficiantes mistéricos, a los que de forma convencional denominamos orfeotelestas' (Jiménez San Cristóbal)[94]
>
> 'Perhaps some *orpheotelestai* had ready-made bundles of these [gold tablets] to hand out to those who had paid to be initiated.' (Johnston)[95]
>
> '[T]he word Ὀρφεοτελεστής is virtually a technical term ... a term of art used by erudite ancient "historians of religion"' (Bernabé)[96]

It may therefore come as a surprise to learn that the word is only attested three times in surviving Greek literature, and is only clearly linked to initiation in one case, of doubtful date.[97] We need to examine what it might mean in more detail.

A τελεστής is someone who performs a τελετή, which has been traditionally defined as a 'rite, esp. initiation into the mysteries' (*LSJ s.v.* τελετή). The

[93] Guthrie 1952: 202.

[94] Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 771.

[95] Graf and Johnston 2013: 135.

[96] Bernabé 2014: 36, repeating Bernabé 2006: 106.

[97] Bernabé 2006: 106-8 collects the evidence.

comprehensive survey of the use of the term by Zijderveld and Schuddeboom has, however, shown that the picture is a little more complicated than that.[98] In the words of Aristotle, 'the mysteries are the most honoured rite of all' (τὰ γὰρ μυστήρια πασῶν τιμωτάτη τελετή, *Rh.* 1401a15), indicating that while the term was certainly applied to initiation, it was also applied to a range of other rites. The derivation appears to be from τελέω, 'to perform, fulfil'. It could be used, for example, of the Olympic Games (Pind. *Ol.* 10.53) or the Panathenaia (Pind. *Pyth.* 9.97) or the Anthesteria (Eur. *IT* 959) or the Adonia (Ar. *Pax* 419-20), as well as of Eleusis (Isoc. *Paneg.* 28). In later times, however, after the classical period, the meaning became restricted to ceremonies of a special nature, often secret, symbolical or magical.[99]

I shall discuss the question of Orphism in more detail in the next chapter.[100] We have seen that Plato's initiators who knock at rich men's doors might have books ascribed to Orpheus, though we do not know their content. Burkert identifies as one of the meanings of 'Orphic' (Ὀρφικοί), someone who performs the Orphic mysteries (οἱ τὰ Ὀρφικὰ μυστήρια τελοῦντες, Ach. Tat. *Comm. Arat.*17.11 Di Maria = *OF*114), but the only source he cites is of the Imperial period.[101] It certainly cannot be assumed in advance that any reference to Orpheus *ipso facto* identifies the context as concerned with initiation.

The first of the three occurrences of Ὀρφεοτελεσταί comes in the *Characters* of Theophrastus. Theophrastus was a pupil of Aristotle, and his *Characters* are a mildly satirical treatment of various types of person in contemporary

[98] Schuddeboom 2009. See also Clinton 2003: 53-8.

[99] Schuddeboom 2009: 36-7, 99.

[100] Chapter Two section 6.

[101] Burkert 1982: 3-4.

Athenian society, among whom is the superstitious man (δεισιδαίμων).[102] He starts the day by washing in three springs and sprinkling himself with holy water, he throws three stones on the road if a weasel crosses his path, and so on. He consults multiple religious experts (ἐξηγηταί, ὀνειροκρίται, μάντεις, ὀρνιθοσκόποι) not only about his dreams, but also if a mouse nibbles through his grain sack. In addition,

> καὶ τελεσθησόμενος πρὸς τοὺς Ὀρφεοτελεστὰς κατὰ μῆνα πορεύεσθαι μετὰ τῆς γυναικὸς (ἐὰν δὲ μὴ σχολάζῃ ἡ γυνή, μετὰ τῆς τίτθης) καὶ τῶν παίδων.
>
> (Theophr. *Char.* 16.12-13 = *OF*654)

> He will go monthly to the celebrators of Orphic rites to take part in their ceremonies, with his wife (or if she is busy, the nurse) and children.

This passage has puzzled those who assume that it must mean that he is going to be initiated, as initiation is a one-off process, not something that could happen every month. Explanations include that this is meant as extreme ridicule, that he just went to prepare for the actual ceremony, like a Christian convert preparing for catechism, or that the Ὀρφεοτελεσταί devised some fresh ceremony each time to take his money.[103] Theophrastus, however, while gently exaggerating, does not usually suggest anything very far from reality, and this does not at all explain why he takes the family along. The obvious solution is that this does not relate to initiation at all, but to some other kind of rite, of what kind is not clear. It is Orphic either because it too used writings ascribed to Orpheus as an authority, or simply because Orpheus was credited with founding all kinds of τελεταί.[104]

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[102] *Char.* 16; Diggle 2004, Bowden 2008.

[103] Ussher 1993 *ad loc*, Diggle 2004 *ad loc*, Nodar Domínguez 2011, Betegh 2014: 159.

[104] Ὀπφεὺς μὲν γὰρ τελετὰς θ' ἡμῖν κατέδειξε, Ar. *Ran.* 1032 = *OF*510, 547, 626. Cf. Linforth 1941: 102-4, who suggests it may be meant to indicate a private, unofficial rite.

The next instance of the word comes in a fragment of Philodemus, in the first century BC.

> ὀλίγον λόγον οὗτος, Ὀρφεοτελεστοῦ τυμπάνωι καὶ παιδαγωγοῦ καλαμίδι προσθεὶς ὅτι "δεῖ τὰ̣ ψευδορήμονα μὴ ξενόσ[τ]ομα μόνον ἐγλέγειν, ἀλλὰ <καὶ> κάλλιστα,
>
> (Phld. fr. 181 = *OF*655)
>
> He has little reason to add with the tumpanon of an Orpheotelest and the pen of a schoolteacher that false words should not be chosen for their strange sound alone, but the most beautiful.

The point of the comparison, from the author's *Περὶ ποημάτων*, is perhaps just that the sound of this Orpheotelest was wild and exotic. All we really know of him is that he had a kind of tambourine associated with the ecstatic rites of Dionysus, Cybele and the Corybants.[105] Whether this had anything to do with initiation we cannot say, and in any case this is some time after our period.

There is no doubt about the third instance, which occurs in Plutarch:

> Πρὸς δὲ Φίλιππον τὸν ὀρφεοτελεστὴν παντελῶς πτωχὸν ὄντα, λέγοντα δ' ὅτι οἱ παρ' αὐτῷ μυηθέντες μετὰ τὴν τοῦ βίου τελευτὴν εὐδαιμονοῦσι, 'τί οὖν, ὦ ἀνόητε' εἶπεν, 'οὐ τὴν ταχίστην ἀποθνῄσκεις, ἵν' ἅμα παύσῃ κακοδαιμονίαν καὶ πενίαν κλαίων;'
>
> (Plut. *Apopth. Lacon.* 224d = *OF*653)
>
> To Philip the Orpheotelest, who was a complete beggar, but said that those initiated by him were happy after the end of this life, [Leotychidas] said 'Why then, you fool, don't you die as soon as possible so that you may at the same time stop bewailing your ill fortune and poverty?'

[105] 'Tumpana, inventions of my mother Rhea [= Cybele] and myself [Dionysus]' (τύμπανα, Ῥέας τε μητρὸς ἐμά θ' εὑρήματα, Eur. *Bacch.* 59), 'after that he was given Corybantic rites, but took their tumpanon' (μετὰ τοῦτ' ἐκορυβάντιζ', ὁ δ' αὐτῷ τυμπάνῳ ᾄξας, Ar. *Vesp.* 11); Edmonds 2013b: 204-5.

Obviously we do have here an Orphic initiator. The problem is to establish the date. This is clearly a floating anecdote here attached to Leotychidas, as is proved by a later version in Diogenes Laertius (D.L. 6.1.4) where a similar remark is credited to Antisthenes when being initiated into Orphic mysteries (μυόμενος ποτε τὰ Ὀρφικὰ) by someone described just as a priest (τοῦ ἱερέως). The anecdote might date from any time before Plutarch (late first to early second century AD), and the term ὀρφεοτελεστής might even have been introduced by Plutarch himself when retelling the story. As I noted above, τελετή after the classical period took on a more restricted meaning connected to secret rites.

The case for considering Orpheotelest as the distinctive name for private initiators in the classical period can therefore be summarised as follows. The term occurs once during, or shortly after, the period, when it appears not to have referred to initiation. It subsequently occurs at an uncertain date which may have been some centuries later, when it did refer to initiation. I think that we must conclude that in this sense it is a chimaera of modern scholarship, and that the term should no longer be used.

6: Magi

The third group that has been identified with the private initiators is the magi, who appear in the Derveni Papyrus, which is usually, and as I shall argue, rightly, connected with initiation. This document refers to 'the incantations of the magi' (ἐπωιδὴ δὲ μάγων, VI.2) and says that 'the magi make offerings' (τὴν θυσίαν ... ποιοῦσιν οἱ μάγοι, VI.4-5) and that initiates make offerings 'in the same way the magi do' (κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ μάγοις, VI.8-9). Before examining the much-debated question of what the term signifies in the Derveni text, I shall outline what it means in other contexts of the period.[106] Unfortunately, it has two fairly distinct meanings, neither of which seems at first sight appropriate in this case.

The first meaning is that of an Iranian priest, from the Old Persian *magu-*, 'priest'.[107] It is from Herodotus that we learn most about them. They chant theogonies at sacrifices (1.1.32),[108] supervise burials at which the corpse is first mangled by a bird or dog (1.140), kill all kinds of animals except dogs and men (1.1.40), make libations of wine (7.43), quell storms with spells (γόησι) (7.191) and interpret dreams (1.107, 7.19) and portents (7.37). Xenophon describes them as religious experts (οἱ περὶ τοὺς θεοὺς τεχνίται, *Cyr.* 8.3.11).

[106] For general surveys, see Nock 1972, De Jong 1997: 387-403, Graf 1997: 20-35, Bremmer 1999a, Martín Hernandez 2006: 60-72, Calvo Martínez 2007.

[107] De Jong 1997: 389.

[108] Bernabé 2006: 105 suggest that they actually sang a hymn, and that the theogony is Herodotus' projection of Orphic practice on to the Persians.

Herodotus lists the Magi (Μάγοι) as one of the six tribes of the Medes (1.101), but there is not much other evidence for a Median origin.[109] Diogenes Laertius says that Zoroaster was the first magus (τῶν Μάγων, ὧν ἄρξαι Ζωροάστρην τὸν Πέρσην, D.L. 1.2), citing the Lydian historian Xanthus in support. A pseudo-Platonic dialogue also connects them with Zoroaster (ὁ μὲν μαγείαν τε διδάσκει τὴν Ζωροάστρου τοῦ Ὡρομάζου, *Alc. 1* 122a). The Herodotean magi seem to conform to Zoroastrian practices such as the exposure of the dead, the killing of noxious animals (*xrafstras*) and reverence for the dog.[110] In the Hellenistic period the term came to be used more widely for non-Iranians.[111]

The second meaning of magus is very different, being applied to Greeks not foreigners and being decidedly pejorative. In Sophocles, Oedipus insults Tiresias as a magus and a plotter (μάγον τοιόνδε μηχανορράφον, *OT* 387), while in Euripides Helen vanishes through their tricks (μάγων τέχναισιν, *Or.* 1497-8), Iphigeneia is described as singing barbarous songs like a magus (μαγεύουσ', *IT* 1337), and their spells (μαγεύμασι, *Supp.* 1110) are used to try and prolong life. Plato calls those who corrupt the young 'terrible magi' (οἱ δεινοὶ μάγοι, *Resp.* 572e) and connects their art with antidotes to drugs and spells (τὴν μαγευτικὴν τὴν περὶ τὰ ἀλεξιφάρμακα, *Plt.* 280e); a scholiast to Aristophanes also has a magus using incantations to produce rings to protect against charms (ἐπαοιδαῖς καὶ τέχναις τισὶ δακτυλίους ἀντιφαρμάκους εἰργάζετο, schol. *Plut.* 883). They sound, in fact, rather like the γόης or magician that we looked at earlier in this chapter,[112] and the sophist Gorgias does indeed make explicit that the arts of the γόης and the magus are similar

[109] De Jong 1997: 391-2.

[110] De Jong 1997: 393.

[111] Nock 1972: 319-21.

[112] Above, section 3.

ways of deceiving the mind (γοητείας δὲ καὶ μαγείας δισσαὶ τέχναι εὕρηνται, αἳ εἰσι ψυχῆς ἁμαρτήματα καὶ δόξης ἀπατήματα, *Hel.* fr. 11.10).

A meaning that is both positive in tone and referring to Greeks is hard to find. The prime candidate is what appears to be a fragment of Heraclitus preserved by Clement of Alexandria, a Christian theologian of the second and third centuries AD. It is from the part of Clement's *Exhortation* to the Greeks in which he exposes what he claims to be the secrets of the mysteries, which prove to be either bathetic or indecent. After scornfully recounting the episode from a version of the Eleusis myth in which Baubo exposes her genitals ('a fine sight, and worthy of a goddess!', καλά γε τὰ θεάματα καὶ θεᾷ πρέποντα, Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2.21), he calls the Athenians and the other Greeks feeble-minded (ματαιόφρονος) for believing such things, and goes on:

> τίσι δὴ μαντεύεται Ἡράκλειτος ὁ Ἐφέσιος; νυκτιπόλοις, μάγοις, βάκχοις, λήναις, μύσταις, τούτοις ἀπειλεῖ τὰ μετὰ θάνατον, τούτοις μαντεύεται τὸ πῦρ· τὰ γὰρ νομιζόμενα κατὰ ἀνθρώπους μυστήρια ἀνιερωστὶ μυοῦνται.
>
> (Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2.22)
>
> To whom does Heraclitus the Ephesian prophesy? Night-walkers, magi, Bacchi, maenads, initiates, he threatens these with what is after death and prophesies the fire to them; for they are initiated in an unholy way into the mysteries accepted among the people.

The words 'νυκτιπόλοις, μάγοις, βάκχοις, λήναις, μύσταις' have been the cause of some controversy. They have often been taken as a direct quotation from Heraclitus (DK22B14).[113] νυκτιπόλοις, 'night-walkers', appears to be an adjective generally describing the succeeding four groups.[114] If Heraclitus did

[113] Bremmer 1999a: 2-3 and Calvo Martínez 2007: 306-8 summarise the debate with bibliographical references to earlier work. See also Lloyd 1979: 12-13, Graf 1997: 21, Bernabé 2006: 102, Martín Hernandez 2006: 64-5, Graf 2014: 79-80, Piano 2016: 219-22.

[114] Martín Hernandez 2006: 64-5, Graf 2014: 79-80.

refer to magi here, then we seem to have a use of the term from the late sixth or early fifth century BC, earlier than anything else I cited above, placing them in the company of generally respectable Greeks, even if they were not approved of by Heraclitus. Bernabé, indeed, believes all four to be 'términos propios del mundo de los misterios órfico-dionisíacos'.[115]

Magus normally meant 'magician' at the time of Clement, but there is no suggestion of magic here, which is in favour of the term belonging to Heraclitus rather than Clement.[116] There are, however, a number of grounds for scepticism:

(a) It is not in fact clear that Clement is claiming this list as the actual words of Heraclitus. Lloyd observes that as it is a list not a grammatical sentence, it might be especially susceptible to interpolation and corruption.[117]

(b) Clement is a polemicist whose aim is to condemn and ridicule his opponents rather than to report them accurately. As I note below,[118] his account of the mysteries is confused and appears to be based on a second-hand compilation. There is no reason to suppose that he would have any concern to transmit Heraclitus' precise words.

(c) I shall try to demonstrate in a following chapter[119] that there is no real evidence for Dionysiac mysteries before about the start of the fourth century,

[115] Bernabé 2006: 102.

[116] Graf 1997: 21.

[117] Lloyd 1979: 12n18.

[118] Chapter Seven section 5.

[119] Chapter Three below.

which means that a concatenation of Bacchoi and initiates a century earlier would be something of an outlier.

(d) Ephesus was part of the Persian empire at the time of Heraclitus, which suggests that he would have been familiar with Persian magi and unlikely to have used the word for Greeks. He is also unlikely to have associated the priests of Zoroastrianism, a religion in which light and fire were central, with 'night-walkers'.[120]

(e) The words here grouped with magi, that is βάκχοι, λῆναι and μύσται without further qualification, are not otherwise attested before at least the late fifth century, λήναι not until Theocritus.[121]

On balance, then, I conclude that this use of the term magi is probably not that of Heraclitus, and is more likely to be due to Clement or his immediate source.

The Hippocratic text *On the sacred disease*, which I shall discuss in the next section, criticises the activities of 'magi and purifiers and beggar priests and roaming charlatans' (μάγοι τε καὶ καθάρται καὶ ἀγύρται καὶ ἀλαζόνες, *Morb. sacr.* 1 = *OF*657). Bernabé has suggested that the first two terms are neutral technical ones, and the second two are the author's explanation of what they

[120] Calvo Martínez 2007: 306. Piano 2016: 219 (following Gershevitch 1964: 24-6) suggests that the magi were not primarily Zoroastrians, but rather a kind of technical religious expert available for hire; it seems clear, however, that whatever their origins they were at this period closely associated with Zoroastrianism (De Jong 1997: 387-403, Choksy 2005: 9990).

[121] βάκχοι Eur. *Bacch.* 491, λῆναι Theoc. *Id.* 26 tit. (but ληναϊζουσιν in Heraclit. DK22B15, also transmitted by Clement), μύσται *P. Derv.* VI, gold leaf B10; Bremmer 1999a: 2-3. νυκτιπόλοι occurs in Aeschylus (fr. 273a.8 Radt).

really are.[122] This, however, is not obvious, and it seems more natural to take the first two also as having a generally pejorative connotation.[123]

There is also no example from this period, apart from possibly the one we are about to discuss, of anyone describing themselves as a magus. Later this did occur in the magical papyri.[124] Kingsley sees Empedocles as a magus,[125] but there is no evidence that he used the term himself. By the Imperial period, several centuries later, some writers did try to redeem the term and distinguish it from γόης; Diogenes Laertius says of the magi that 'they do not practice the magic of the sorcerers' (τὴν δὲ γοητικὴν μαγείαν οὐδ᾽ ἔγνωσαν, D.L. 1.8).[126]

To sum up, then, magus was used either as a positive term for Persian Zoroastrian priests, or as a pejorative term for Greek magicians. It is doubtful if we have any example of it being used in a positive sense of Greeks, and certainly there is no attested case of anyone calling themselves a magus.

This takes us back to the Derveni Papyrus, with whose references to magi I began this section. I shall treat the papyrus and its sixth column in more detail

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[122] Bernabé 2006: 103-4.

[123] Graf 2014: 81 has proposed Theophrastus *Hist. Pl.* 9.15.7, where a plant identified with the moly of Homer is used πρὸς τὰ ἀλεξιφάρμακα καὶ τὰς μαγείας, as an example of *mageia* used positively for a healing plant. I think, however, that it only shows that the plant was used in charms and spells. Hort's Loeb translation (Hort 1916), 'against spells and magic arts', takes πρὸς very awkwardly in a double sense, 'for the purpose of' and 'against', and should rather be 'for antidotes to spells and for magic' (Smyth 1956: 1695 3c), that is, for both offensive and defensive charms.

[124] Nock 1972: 318.

[125] Kingsley 1995: 217-32.

[126] He cites a pseudo-Aristotelian *Μαγικός* (fr. 36) and Deinon; Graf 2014: 82. For similar views, see Apollonius of Tyana *Ep.* 16 = *OF*8i8, Dio Chrysostom 36.41, Apuleius *Apol.* 27 = *OF*819 and Cosmas Migne *PG* 38.491.

in a subsequent chapter.[127] Briefly, however, it mainly consists of an anonymous philosophical commentary, possibly dating to the late fifth century BC, on an old theogonic poem. In addition to this, the author also discusses various religious practices, and in the sixth column we have the following information on the magi:

(i) 'The incantation of the magi is able to remove/change the hindering daimons' (ἐπωιδὴ δὲ μάγων δύναται δαίμονας ἐμποδὼν γινομένους μεθιστάναι, *P. Derv.* VI.2-3),

(ii) 'The magi make offerings, as if, as it were, paying an atonement' (τὴν θυσίαν ... ποιοῦσιν οἱ μάγοι, ὡσπερεὶ ποινὼν ἀποδιδόντες, *P. Derv.* VI. 4-5),

(iii) 'They pour on the offerings water and milk, from which they also make libations' (τοῖς δὲ ἱεροῖς ἐπισπένδουσιν ὕδωρ καὶ γάλα, ἐξ ὧνπερ καὶ τὰς χοὰς ποιοῦσι, *P. Derv.* VI.6-7),

(iv) 'The cakes they offer are countless and many-knobbed, for the souls too are countless' (ἀνάριθμα καὶ πολυόμφαλα τὰ πόπανα θύουσιν ὅτι καὶ αἱ ψυχαὶ ἀνάριθμοί εἰσι, *P. Derv.* VI.7-8),

(v) 'The initiates make preliminary offerings to the Eumenides in the same way the magi do' (μύσται Εὐμενίσι προθύουσι κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ μάγοις, *P. Derv.* VI.8-9).

They are therefore chanting incantations and making offerings of water, milk and cakes, apparently to the souls of the dead, and possibly to the Eumenides, depending on whether αὐτὰ in (v) is read as applying to the powers offered to as well as to the manner of the offering. In the light of our previous

[127] Chapter Seven section 5.

conclusions on the use of the term magus this raises a number of questions. Are these magi Persian or Greek? Does the author approve of them? Is he one himself?

Scholars have not been unanimous in their answers to these questions. Tsantsanoglou argues that they are Iranians, as the term is never used of Greeks except pejoratively; even if they were an unattested class of Greek magi, he believes that they would have imported Iranian beliefs and practices and so be much the same thing.[128] Ferrari also emphasises their Iranian roots,[129] while Bremmer thinks them Medes who migrated to Greece and became assimilated.[130] Calvo Martínez agrees that they are Persian, but maintains they are just put forward as examples with which to compare the initiates.[131] Jourdan suggests that the author may be exploiting the ambiguity and playing with both meanings, the positive Persian and negative Greek, but thinks that his own attitude to them is negative, as they cannot really do what they pretend to do.[132] Janko also considers the author, who is, he believes, a rationalist, to take a critical stance, and that they are more likely to be Greek.[133] Piano thinks their demonology and ritual primarily Greek, and that they are perhaps hellenised magi who have adapted Iranian beliefs to the local Greek context.[134] Graf proposes that they are Greeks who had been active in the East and appropriated the Persian title for themselves.[135] Edmonds, too,

[128] Tsantsanoglou 1997: 110n25.

[129] Ferrari 2011b.

[130] Bremmer 2002: 19.

[131] Calvo Martínez 2007: 310-13.

[132] Jourdan 2003: 38.

[133] Janko 2008: 47.

[134] Piano 2016: 239-41.

[135] Graf 2014: 83.

agrees that they are Greek and presented in a positive light as experts, though not as expert as the author himself, who is not one of them.[136] Betegh, however, does think that our author would identify as a magus.[137]

The diversity of opinion in this survey, which I do not claim to be comprehensive, perhaps indicates that we do not have enough evidence to determine the matter. Nevertheless, I believe that a few tentative conclusions can be drawn.

There is some evidence which might suggest that Persian magi visited Greece.[138] Aristotle is said by Diogenes Laertius to have described a Syrian magus in Athens meeting Socrates (μάγον τινὰ ἐλθόντα ἐκ Συρίας εἰς Ἀθήνας, Arist. fr. 32 = D.L. 2.45), a Chaldaean was a guest-friend of Plato (Πλάτων ξένον ὑπεδέξατο Χαλδαῖον, Philodemos *Σύνταξις τῶν φιλοσόφων* (*P. Herc.* 164, 1021) III.15.), a Persian erected a statue of Plato in the Academy (D.L. 3.25) and some magi happened to be at Athens when he died (*magi, qui forte Athenis erant*, Sen. *Ep.* 58.31). Even, however, if these stories are true, and not simply later attempts to connect Plato with Eastern wisdom, there may be a suspicion that these Persians, Syrians, Chaldaeans and magi may all just be vague descriptions of some kind of wise man from the East.

There may seem a certain improbability in supposing the presence in Greek lands of the hereditary practitioners of an alien religion of fire sacrifice. In fact, what we are told of the Derveni magi does not correspond to what we know

[136] Edmonds 2008: 35.

[137] Betegh 2004: 78-83.

[138] Tsantsanoglou 2008: 37.

of the Iranians.[139] The divine powers mentioned, Erinyes and Eumenides, are Greek, and it is difficult to equate them with the Persian *artavan*, who are not revenge daimons.[140] Water libations are not known in the Iranian cult, and the many-knobbed cakes are also Greek.[141] I think the best formulation is that these are essentially Greek practitioners of Greek religion. Whether they have just borrowed the name of magus as a prestigious title, or whether they were originally influenced by the Persians, or whether indeed they are themselves wandering Persians who have now changed their tenets and practices to Greek ones, we do not know.

There is no sign of a hostile attitude to the magi in the author's account. Taking a different view, Jourdan interprets the conjunction ὡσπερεί in (iii) above, referring to the offerings of the magi, and translated by her as 'comme si', as implying that the writer believes that the rites described do not really work, and that the magi are just deceiving the initiates; in contrast, after line 10 the writer puts forward the genuine rites.[142] ὡσπερεί, however, is commonly used not to imply scepticism but rather to give as close an approximation as possible to something difficult to describe.[143] Also, there is nothing to show that two

[139] Bremmer 1999a: 8, Bernabé 2006: 104-5, Tsantsanoglou 2008: 35, Ferrari 2011b: 80-2, Piano 2016: 225-37, Bremmer 2019 (forthcoming).

[140] Ferrari 2011b: 81. Ahmadi 2014 suggests that the hindering daimons, who are not the Erinyes, are the Iranian *daēvas*. On the Erinyes and Eumenides in the Derveni Papyrus, see below Chapter Eight section 8.

[141] Ferrari 2011b: 81, refuting Russell 2001: 54-5.

[142] Jourdan 2003: 38-9.

[143] E.g.: ἀεὶ ἀνταποδιδοίη τὰ ἕτερα τοῖς ἑτέροις γιγνόμενα, ὡσπερεὶ κύκλῳ περιιόντα, 'always returning from one to the other, as if going in a circle', Pl. *Phd.* 72b; ὡσπερεὶ ὑπὸ ἀγαθοῦ πύκτου πληγείς, ἐσκοτώθην, 'blinded as if struck by a good boxer', Pl. *Prt.* 339e. Cf. Denniston 1950: 490.

sets of rites are being described, or that the author is moving from ones he disapproves to ones he approves.[144]

Janko and Laks approach the matter from a different perspective, seeing the author as a rationalist who is concerned here only to explain away superstition.[145] I do not think this view is sustainable. He regards Orpheus as a divine authority, if one needing interpretation.[146] He states clearly that the Eumenides are souls (Εὐμενίδες γὰρ ψυχαί εἰσιν, VI.9-10) and that incantations are effective against hindering daimons (ἐπωιδὴ δὲ μάγων δύναται δαίμονας ἐμποδὼν γινομένους μεθιστάναι, VI.2-3), so he is a believer in a world of divine or semi-divine beings.

There is further evidence in the preceding column of the papyrus, where we read:

χρη[στη]ριαζομ[ ].ο̣ι.ε̣[
χ̣ρησ̣[τ]ηρ̣ιάζον[ται].[.]. . . . . .[. .]ι
αὐτοῖς πάριμεν̣ [εἰς τὸ μα]ν̣τεῖον ἐπερ̣[ω]τ̣ήσ̣[οντες,]
τῶν μαντευομένω̣ν̣ [ἕν]εκεν, εἰ θέμι[. . .] . . η̣δ̣α̣[
ἐν Ἅ̣δου δεινὰ τί ἀ̣π̣ιστοῦσι; οὐ γινώσ̣[κοντες ἐ]ν̣ύ̣πνια
ο̣ὐδὲ τῶν ἄλλων π̣ρ̣αγμάτων ἕκασ̣τ̣[ον], δ̣ι̣ὰ ποίω̣ν ἂν
π̣α̣ρ̣α̣δειγμάτων π̣[ι]στεύοιεν;

(*P. Derv.* V.2-8)[147]

... consult an oracle ... they consult an oracle ... we go with them to the oracle

[144] KPT: 168-9.

[145] Laks 1997: 125-6, Janko 2001: 2.

[146] Piano 2016: 129.

[147] See Appendix: The Derveni Papyrus: a note on the text. I have adopted Janko's correction of KPT's ἆρ' to ἐν (l. 6), accepted by Tsantsanoglou 2018: 15-16.

> to ask about the oracular questions if it is lawful ... Why do they not believe the horrors in Hades? Not knowing dreams or each of the other things, through what examples would they believe?

I follow Janko and Jourdan in taking μαντευομένων as passive ('objects of consultation'), [148] but Tsantsanoglou takes it as middle ('those consulting for themselves') and translates 'for them we enter the oracle in order to ask, with regard to those seeking a divination, whether it is proper'.[149] In this case, however, we would expect ὑπέρ, 'on behalf of', rather than ἕνεκεν, 'on account of'. Alternatively, Johnston suggests that this is a kind of generalising 'we' referring to all humans, which is possible.[150]

Janko originally proposed that this is not an actual consultation at all, but that the author is mocking those who believe in the terrors of Hades, which are incredible to his rational mind, and ironically offering to consult an oracle on their behalf about this.[151] He punctuates V.4-6 with a stop after δεινά:

> αὐτοῖς πάριμεν̣ [εἰς τὸ μα]ντεῖον ἐπερ[ω]τήσ[οντες,]
> τῶμ μαντευομέν[ων ἕν]εκεν, εἰ θέμι[ς ἀπιστ]ῆ̣σ̣ᾳ̣[ι]
> ἄν Ἅιδου δεινά. τί ἀ[πισ]τοῦσι;
>
> (*P. Derv.* V.4-6)

> for them we will enter the prophetic shrine to enquire, with regard to the things that are prophesied, whether it is right if one were to disbelieve in the terrors of Hades. Why do they disbelieve?'

[148] Janko 2001: 20n84, Jourdan 2003 *ad loc*.

[149] KPT *ad loc*. See also Tsantsanoglou 2014: 5, Tsantsanoglou 2018: 15-16 for alternatives.

[150] Johnston 2014: 89-91.

[151] Janko 2008: 38, 51.

This interpretation is determined by Janko's preconceived view of the author as a sceptical and rationalist philosopher. I do not quite follow the logic of even a mocking offer to consult an oracle in this case, and I can see no support in the text for any suggestion of a derisive or sceptical attitude.

In his latest contribution[152] he modifies this to change the end of line 5 to εἰ θεμί[τ' ἐσ]τ̣ὶν καὶ τὰ, now translating 'to ask, with regard to what is prophesied, whether the terrors in Hades too are divinely sanctioned'. This seems to imply an actual consultation, though he expects the oracle to claim, wrongly, that the terrors do exist, which he believes still implies a sceptical tone on the part of our author. I am not sure that I entirely understand either his translation or his explanation. It is not plausible that the oracle was actually being asked if it is right to believe in the terrors of Hades.[153] There are no other examples in this period of oracles being asked this kind of question.[154]

Dreams can, according to the author, be used as evidence for the terrors of Hades, as can also other things (πραγμάτων), which may refer to tangible signs sent by the gods, such as natural phenomena.[155] It seems clear that the author is claiming to interpret dreams correctly, possibly using the same interpretive techniques as in his commentary on the theogony.[156]

The author is therefore involved in the consultation of oracles and the interpretation of dreams, and believes in the horrors of Hades, which further confirms that he is not a sceptical rationalist opposed to the magi. In fact, he

[152] Janko 2016b: 19.

[153] As read by Janko 2008: 50, Ferrari 2011b: 74.

[154] Jourdan 2003 *ad loc*, KPT *ad loc*, Johnston 2014: 93-4.

[155] Jourdan 2003 *ad loc*.

[156] Most 1997: 120, Janko 2001: 19n82, Jourdan 2003 *ad loc*, Bernabé 2014: 27-8.

is beginning to sound rather like a magus himself. Here we can bring in a further piece of evidence, from the twentieth column, where the author breaks off his commentary to make the following remarks:

> ἀνθρώπω[ν ἐν] πόλεσιν ἐπιτελέσαντες [τὰ ἱ]ερὰ εἶδον,
> ἔλασσόν σφας θαυμάζω μὴ γινώσκειν· οὐ γὰρ οἷόν τε
> ἀκοῦσαι ὁμοῦ καὶ μαθεῖν τὰ λεγόμενα· ὅσοι δὲ παρὰ τοῦ
> τέχνην ποιουμένου τὰ ἱερά, οὗτοι ἄξιοι θαυμάζεσθαι
> καὶ οἰκτε[ί]ρεσθαι· θαυμάζεσθαι μὲν ὅτι δοκοῦντες
> πρότερον ἢ ἐπιτελέσαι εἰδήσειν ἀπέρχονται ἐπι–
> τελέσαντες πρὶν εἰδέναι οὐδ' ἐπανερόμενοι ὥσπερ
> ὡς εἰδότες τέων εἶδον ἢ ἤκουσαν ἢ ἔμαθον· [οἰ]κτε[ί]ρεσθαι δὲ
> ὅτι οὐκ ἀρκεῖ σφιν τὴν δαπάνην προανηλῶσθαι, ἀλλὰ
> ____ καὶ τῆς γνώμης στερόμενοι πρὸς ἀπέρχονται,
> πρὶν μὲν τὰ [ἱ]ερὰ ἐπιτελέσαι ἐλπίζον[τε]ς εἰδήσειν,
> ἐπ[ιτελέσ]αντ[ες] δὲ στερηθέντες κα[ὶ τῆς] ἐλπί[δος] ἀπέρχονται.
> ____ τω[c.10].υοντ[...] λόγος..[...]ται[..].να
> .[ ].ι τῆι ἑαυτοῦ ο..[μ]ητρὶ μὲν
>]δ' ἀδελφη[ ]ωσειδε
>]..[
>
> (*P. Derv.* XX)

> [As for those men who believe that they learned] when they witnessed the rites while performing them [together with other] people in the cities, I wonder less that they do not understand; for it is not possible to hear and simultaneously comprehend what is being said. But those (who believe that they learned) from someone who makes a profession of the rites deserve to be wondered at and pitied: wondered at because, although they believe before they perform the rites that they will learn, they go away after performing them before having learned, without even asking further questions, as if they knew something of what they saw or heard or were taught; and pitied because it is not enough for them that they paid the fee in advance – they also go away devoid even of their belief. Before they perform the rites expecting to acquire knowledge, but after performing them they go away devoid even of expectation. ... account ... to his own ... mother ... sister ...[157]

[157] KPT translation.

He is talking about two groups of people. The first saw the sacred things (τὰ ἱερὰ εἴδον, XX.1) in the cities (ἐν πόλεσιν, XX.1), though they did not really understand what was happening. 'Seeing the sacred things' seems to reflect the kind of *makarismos* formula used for initiation into the mysteries of Eleusis: 'whoever sees these things is blessed' (ὀλβιος ὅς τάδ' ὄπωπεν, *Hymn. Hom. Cer.* 480; ὅλβιος ὅστις ἰδὼν κεῖν', Pind. fr. 137a = *OF*444), 'those mortals who have seen these rites are thrice blessed' (ὡς τρισόλβιοι κεῖνοι βροτῶν οἵ ταῦτα δερχθέντες τέλη, Soph. fr. 837 Radt).[158] Initiation in the cities must mean Eleusis; it is not clear if he includes rites elsewhere, or if 'cities' is just a conventional plural.[159]

The second group were initiated by professionals, 'those making the sacred things a skill' (παρὰ τοῦ τέχνην ποιουμένου τὰ ἱερά, XX.3-4), who must by contrast with the first group not be connected with the polis, and who charge a fee, to be paid in advance (τὴν δαπάνην προανηλῶσθαι, XX.9). This second group of initiates also, says our author, remains in ignorance, and if this was excusable in the case of the mass initiations in the cities, it is certainly reprehensible in the case of these private practitioners. He does not, however, suggest that their rites are not valid.[160] The author has earlier emphasised the importance for him of the participants understanding what is occurring:

> ὑπό [τε γὰρ] ἁμαρτ[ί]ης
> ϰαὶ [τ]ῆς ἄλλης ἡδον[ῆ]ς νενικημέν̣[οι, οὐ] μ̣α̣ν̣θ̣[άνο]υ̣σιν
> [οὐδὲ] π̣ιστεύουσι. ἀ[πι]στίη δὲ κἀμ̣α̣[θίη ταὐτόν·

[158] Richardson 1974: 313-14, Burkert 1982: 5, KPT *ad loc*, Graf 2014: 69.

[159] Graf 2014: 69-70 suggests Bacchic mysteries performed in city sanctuaries; for a different view of their development see Chapter Three below. Jiménez San Cristóbal 2019: 130 objects that the Eleusinian rites took place not in a city, but on the outskirts of the small town of Eleusis, and so could not be meant, but this was of course very much part of the *polis* of Athens.

[160] Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 774-5 calls them 'falsos oficiantes' and compares them with the magi in Euripides and *On the sacred disease*, but I can see no justification for this.

(*P. Derv.* V.8-10)

> Overcome by error and the other pleasures, they neither learn nor believe. Disbelief and ignorance are the same.

With this emphasis on understanding, we can compare Plato's reference to 'those of the priests and priestesses who take the trouble to be able to give a reason for what they do' (οἱ ... τῶν ἱερέων τε καὶ ἱερειῶν ὅσοις μεμέληκε περὶ ὧν μεταχειρίζονται λόγον οἵοις τ' εἶναι διδόναι, *Meno* 81a-b = *OF*424, 666).[161] This may be an idiosyncrasy of the Derveni author, who after all does devote most of his text to an explanatory commentary. It does not follow that all the private practitioners we are examining had the same priority; they are likely to be a very diverse collection.

We therefore know from column VI that the magi make incantations and offerings in connection with initiation. Column V tells us that the Derveni author himself is involved in consulting oracles, interpreting dreams and warning of the horrors of Hades. Column XX criticises private initiators who do not explain what they are doing. It seems clear that the author is himself a private practitioner who is critical of rivals who provide an inferior service. Whether he would describe himself as a magus is an open question. He talks of them in the third person, which perhaps implies that he would not.[162] On the other hand, he does give some detail of their activities without any overt criticism, which, judging by column XX, is not how he is accustomed to treat his rivals, and so suggests that he would be one of the group.

If all three columns deal with the same or similar kinds of practitioner, we can combine their information to say that they are not connected with the polis,

[161] Kingsley 1995: 161, Kahn 1997: 55, West 1997: 83, KPT: 46-7.

[162] Edmonds 2008: 34-5, Tsantsanoglou 2008: 36-7.

that they warn against the horrors of Hades, that they perform initiations, for which they charge fees payable in advance, that these involve incantations and offerings to daimons and the souls of the dead, that they may also consult oracles and interpret dreams, that they do not always explain what they are doing adequately and that they are sometimes called magi. They are private initiators, as they are not part of polis cult and charge a fee, and, as they deal with the horrors of Hades and the souls of the dead, they evidently offer a better fate in the afterlife. Whether the term magus was a common description for this kind of private initiator or just used by one group we do not know.

The question of what they might believe themselves to be doing in this process, and who might be the daimons that they are appeasing, is one I shall address in later chapters.[163] For the moment, I shall continue to focus on the personnel, and to examine how far they might be considered similar to another group of craftsmen, the doctors.

[163] Chapter Seven section 5 and Chapter Eight below.

7: Two kinds of craftsman

> τίς γὰρ δὴ ξεῖνον καλεῖ ἄλλοθεν αὐτὸς ἐπελθὼν
> ἄλλον γ᾽, εἰ μὴ τῶν οἳ δημιοεργοὶ ἔασι,
> μάντιν ἢ ἰητῆρα κακῶν ἢ τέκτονα δούρων,
> ἢ καὶ θέσπιν ἀοιδόν, ὅ κεν τέρπῃσιν ἀείδων;
> οὗτοι γὰρ κλητοί γε βροτῶν ἐπ᾽ ἀπείρονα γαῖαν·
>
> (Hom. *Od.* 17.382-6)
>
> For who himself invites another coming from elsewhere, unless he be one of the public workers, a seer or healer of ills or builder or indeed a divine singer, who might delight by singing? For these are invited throughout the boundless earth.

Homer here identifies a class of itinerant craftsmen, whom he describes as 'public workers' (δημιοεργοί), who go wherever their services are in demand.[164] They include not only those we might think of as craftsmen, such as builders, but also singer-poet-musicians such as Homer himself, doctors and μάντεις, or seers, which as we have seen[165] is the longest-established term for private religious practitioners.

We have identified, among the plethora of variously-defined private religious practitioners in classical Greece, a group of private initiators offering their clients a better fate in the afterlife. In seeking to understand the nature of these people, it may be helpful to draw a comparison between the religious practitioners in general and another of Homer's craft groups, the medical practitioners. It will be argued that the two have a great deal in common.[166]

[164] Burkert 1992, Dillery 2005: 177-8.

[165] Section 3 above.

[166] As has often been noted, for example by Lloyd 1979: 10-58.

The similarities were indeed obvious to contemporaries. One medical writer says the process in seercraft and medicine is essentially the same: both use what is visible to get knowledge of the invisible (μαντικὴ τοιόνδε· τοῖσι φανεροῖσι μὲν τὰ ἀφανέα γινώσκειν, Hippoc. *Vict.* 1.12).[167] Another compares differences among physicians on diagnosis to differences among seers on the interpretation of bird flight or sacrifices, so that people think that the two disciplines are much on a par (καὶ σχεδὸν ἂν κατά γε τὸ τοιόνδε τὴν τέχνην φαῖεν ὠμοιῶσθαι τῇ μαντικῇ, Hippoc. *Acut.* 8).[168]

Originally, in fact, the two crafts may not have been clearly differentiated. Melampus in Hesiod healed through the science of divination (μαντοσύνης ἰήσατ', fr. 37.14 MW).[169] Calchas in the *Iliad* is a seer called upon in the case of a plague (*Il.* 1.93-100), as was Epimenides in historical times.[170] Pindar describes the centaur Chiron as 'caring for some with soft incantations, others by taking gentle drinks or wrapping ointments round their limbs and setting right others with surgery' (τοὺς μὲν μαλακαῖς ἐπαοιδαῖς ἀμφέπων, τοὺς δὲ προσανέα πίνοντας, ἢ γυίοις περάπτων πάντοθεν φάρμακα, τοὺς δὲ τομαῖς ἔστασεν ὀρθούς, *Pyth.* 3.51-3), which may reflect what he would expect from contemporary practitioners.[171] Euripides refers to those who try to lengthen life through a combination of diet and magic spells (ὅσοι χρῄζουσιν ἐκτείνειν βίον, βρωτοῖσι καὶ ποτοῖσι καὶ μαγεύμασι, *Supp.* 1109-10).[172] The term

[167] Bartoš 2015: 141-4.

[168] Jouanna 1999: 183-4.

[169] Parker 1983: 209.

[170] Parker 1983: 209-10, Johnston 2008: 119-20, with other examples.

[171] Dickie 2001: 14 suggests that the ἐπῳδός was originally a healer.

[172] Dickie 2001: 32.

κάθαρσις was used of both religious purification and by medical writers of natural evacuations.[173]

There is some evidence that even in more recent times medicine was not altogether distinct from religion and magic.[174] Plato recommends purifications and rites (καθαρμῶν καὶ τελετῶν, *Phdr.* 244e = *OF*575) in cases of mental illness, and divides poisoning into that caused naturally and that caused by spells; although he feels the latter may work simply by mental suggestion, he is not certain of this (μὴ σαφὲς ἔχουσι δόγμα περὶ αὐτῶν, *Leg.* 933b = *OF*573). The Hippocratic text *Regimen* allows for the prognosis of physical symptoms by dreams (*Vict.* 4.87), and recommends prayers to the appropriate gods as part of the therapeutic programme (*Vict.* 4.89). The medical author of *On the sacred disease* admits that the magi and other charlatans he is attacking do make sensible dietary recommendations (ἀπέχεσθαι κελεύοντες καὶ ἐδεσμάτων πολλῶν καὶ ἀνεπιτηδείων ἀνθρώποισι νοσέουσιν ἐσθίειν, *Morb. sacr.* 1 = *OF*657). In the Epidaurian *iamata*, accounts of miraculous cures of sleepers in the sanctuary of Asclepius, the god sometimes appears in a dream administering a drug or performing surgery.[175]

Both craft groups of course charged for their services.[176] As the quotation from Homer at the start of this section indicates, both were also itinerant. Herodotus (3.131) describes how the noted physician Democedes went in the course of his career from Croton to Aegina, Athens, Samos and Susa.[177] A

[173] Lloyd 1979: 44, Parker 1983: 213-15.

[174] Lloyd 1979: 40-3, Jouanna 1999: 194-203, Dickie 2001: 24.

[175] LiDonnici 1995. Drugs: A9, A17, A19, B20, B21; surgery: A13, B3, B5, B7. Although these are not itinerant private practitioners, the priests certainly did profit from their services (A4, A7, A10, B5, C4).

[176] On physician's fees, see Jouanna 1999: 119-20.

[177] Jouanna 1999: 25-6.

medical writer says that a doctor must acquire an accurate knowledge of the craft of medicine (τὴν ἰητρικὴν τέχνην) before he can travel from city to city (ἀνὰ τὰς πόλιας φοιτεῦντας, Hippoc. *Lex* 4) as a true physician.

They practised in a competitive environment, as can be seen from Hippocratic treatises such as *On the nature of man* and *The art*, which begin with attacks on those who hold different views. Jouanna's picture of physicians debating with each other in public and being interviewed for public posts before democratic assemblies is, however, exaggerated.[178] The principal evidence he puts forward for public debates, *On the nature of man* 1.15-20, actually refers to philosophers not doctors, which is confirmed by it proceeding 'what I have said about these men is sufficient, but about the doctors ...' (περὶ μὲν οὖν τούτων ἀρκεῖ μοι τὰ εἰρημένα. τῶν δὲ ἰητρῶν, *Nat. hom.* 2). Edmonds has further shown that the idea of public auditions for civic appointments does not hold up.[179]

In the case of religious practitioners, there is evidence for debates on the interpretation of oracles, such as the wooden wall oracle at the time of the Persian invasion (Hdt. 7.142).[180] We saw earlier how the author of the Derveni Papyrus criticises his rivals.[181] The most interesting case, however, sets up a direct opposition between doctors and the magi, purifiers and so forth when they cannot agree under whose professional competence the disease of epilepsy falls.

[178] Jouanna 1999: 78-80, 83-4.

[179] Edmonds 2013b: 118n58.

[180] Edmonds 2013b: 118-22.

[181] Section 6 above.

The medical author of the Hippocratic treatise *On the sacred disease* (ἡ ἱερή νοῦσος), as epilepsy was known, begins with a sustained attack on a group of competitors for the appropriate treatment of the disease (*Morb. sacr.* 1 = *OF*657).[182] These competitors are described as 'magi and purifiers and beggar priests and roaming charlatans' (μάγοι τε καὶ καθάρται καὶ ἀγύρται καὶ ἀλαζόνες). They are therefore private religious practitioners, who regard epilepsy as a divine visitation, and consequently their responsibility, rather than a physical ailment to be treated by doctors.

We learn from the author something of their methods. They employ purifications (καθαρμούς) and incantations (ἐπαοιδάς) or spells (μαγεύων). They forbid baths, a long list of foodstuffs such as red mullet, pigeons and onions, the wearing of black or goatskins and the placing of foot on foot or hand on hand. Although the author ascribes to them claims to marvellous powers over the weather, calling up storms and eclipsing the sun, it does not appear that they make any use of these in their treatment. They analyse symptoms in what is indeed an analogous way to doctors,[183] diagnosing for example loud cries as caused by Poseidon and foaming at the mouth by Ares. The results of their purifications they bury in the earth, hide in the mountains or throw into the sea.

The author is scathing about their pretensions, arguing that the disease is no more sacred than any other, and that indeed they are themselves impious in maintaining that a divine power can be overmastered by human craft (τοὺ θείου ἡ δύναμις ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπου γνώμης κρατεῖται καὶ δεδούλωται). Applying some elementary scientific logic in a *reductio ad absurdum*, he observes that if goatskins were so deleterious, then Libyan goatherds would never be

[182] Fully discussed in Lloyd 1979: 15-29, 37-49.

[183] Jouanna 1999: 184-8.

healthy. He puts forward instead a rational medical account of epilepsy, explaining that it is caused by phlegm blocking the veins that carry air from the brain, as is proved by its attacking only those of phlegmatic temperament; it is also influenced by the winds, as is proved by attacks being most likely when the wind is southerly. Treatment is by the appropriate regimen (ὑπὸ διαίτης) for the particular occasion (τὸν καιρὸν, *Morb. sacr.* 18 = *OF*657), which the author does not specify, perhaps considering it a trade secret.

Although it seems obvious to us which party is in the right, that epilepsy is a medical condition, and that the hypothesis of divine visitation is just superstition, there is no reason why it would have been obvious at the time. The explanations offered by each side are both wrong, in different ways, and it is a moot point which recommended treatment would have been of more use to the patient. We have here a dispute between two comparable craft groups. These are private practitioners arguing among themselves; there is no opposition to or indeed mention of polis religion.[184]

In view of these parallels between private medical and private religious enterprise, it might be worthwhile to look at how doctors entered their profession, as this may give us some clues as to what might have been the case with the seers and initiators.

As may have been common with many other crafts, medical knowledge was passed down in the family from father to son.[185] In Homer the Greek army doctors, Podaleirius and Machaon, are the sons of Asclepius (Ἀσκληπιοῦ δύο παῖδε, ἰητῆρ' ἀγαθώ, *Il.* 2.730-1), which doubtless reflects the normal situation in the world outside myth. The physician families of the great medical centres

[184] Eidinow 2011: 27.

[185] Burkert 1982: 6-8, Jouanna 1999: 42-4, Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 779-80.

of Cos and Cnidus were said to be descended from Asclepius (τῶν ἐν Κῶι καὶ Κνίδωι ἰατρῶν, ὡς Ἀσκληπιάδαι, Theopomp. *FGrH* 115 F103).[186] We have seen something similar with the families of mythical seers.[187]

It was expected that a doctor would be trained up from childhood. In the words of a medical treatise in the Hippocratic corpus, the good doctor is created by 'ability, teaching, the right location, learning from childhood, hard work and time' (φύσιος· διδασκαλίης· τόπου εὐφυέος· παιδομαθίης· φιλοπονίης· χρόνου, Hippoc. *Lex* 2). Galen some centuries later speaks of physicians in times gone by as being taught dissection by their parents in childhood just like reading and writing (παρὰ τοῖς γονεῦσιν ἐκ παίδων ἀσκουμένοις, ὥσπερ ἀναγινώσκειν καὶ γράφειν, οὕτως ἀνατέμνειν, Gal. *De anat. admin.* 2.1 (280)).[188]

Entry to the craft was not confined to family members, however, as we see from the following passage of the famous Hippocratic oath,[189] in which the physician swears as follows:

> ἡγήσεσθαι μὲν τὸν διδάξαντά με τὴν τέχνην ταύτην ἴσα γενέτῃσιν ἐμοῖς, καὶ βίου κοινώσεσθαι, καὶ χρεῶν χρηΐζοντι μετάδοσιν ποιήσεσθαι, καὶ γένος τὸ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἀδελφοῖς ἴσον ἐπικρινεῖν ἄρρεσι, καὶ διδάξειν τὴν τέχνην ταύτην, ἢν χρηΐζωσι μανθάνειν, ἄνευ μισθοῦ καὶ συγγραφῆς, παραγγελίης τε καὶ ἀκροήσιος καὶ τῆς λοίπης ἁπάσης μαθήσιος μετάδοσιν ποιήσεσθαι υἱοῖς τε ἐμοῖς καὶ τοῖς τοῦ ἐμὲ διδάξαντος, καὶ μαθητῇσι συγγεγραμμένοις τε καὶ ὡρκισμένοις νόμῳ ἰητρικῷ, ἄλλῳ δὲ οὐδενί.
>
> (Hippoc. *Jus.*)

[186] Jouanna 1999: 10-16.

[187] Section 3 above.

[188] Jouanna 1999: 17-19.

[189] Nittis 1940, Edelstein 1943, Jouanna 1999: 47-8, Nutton 2004: 69-70.

> To hold the one who taught me the craft equal to my parents, and to share my livelihood with him, and provide him with money when he is in need, and to consider his family as my own brothers, and to teach them the craft without charge or contract if they wish to learn it, to pass on the rules and oral and other teaching to my sons and those of my teacher and to those pupils who have subscribed to the customary medical covenant and oath, but to no one else.

This clearly allows outsiders to join the family group, and to take on the rights and obligations of members of the family. A commentary on the oath attributed to Galen says that this was because of a shortage of family members to carry on the tradition.[190] It should be emphasised, however, that we do not know how generally this covenant was applied, or even what its date was; the extension of a kind of apprenticeship arrangement to a lifelong obligation seems highly unusual in the period.[191]

A different kind of arrangement is alluded to in Plato's *Protagoras*, when Socrates is questioning a young Athenian with the same name as the famous doctor:

> ὥσπερ ἂν εἰ ἐπενόεις παρὰ τὸν σαυτοῦ ὁμώνυμον ἐλθὼν Ἱπποκράτη τὸν Κῷον, τὸν τῶν Ἀσκληπιαδῶν, ἀργύριον τελεῖν ὑπὲρ σαυτοῦ μισθὸν ἐκείνῳ, εἴ τίς σε ἤρετο: 'εἰπέ μοι, μέλλεις τελεῖν, ὦ Ἱππόκρατες, Ἱπποκράτει μισθὸν ὡς τίνι ὄντι;' τί ἂν ἀπεκρίνω;
> εἶπον ἄν, ἔφη, ὅτι ὡς ἰατρῷ.
> ὡς τίς γενησόμενος;
> ὡς ἰατρός, ἔφη.

[190] Arabic version preserved in Ibn Abi Uṣaybi'ah 1, 2419-31 Müller = Rosenthal 1956 3g (81). Rosenthal notes that it may not be by Galen and that this comment may not be part of the Galen citation. Galen remarks elsewhere that in time the craft was extended from family members to suitable outsiders (ἐπεὶ δὲ, τοῦ χρόνου προϊόντος, οὐ τοῖς ἐγγόνοις μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἔξω τοῦ γένους ἔδοξε καλὸν εἶναι μεταδιδόναι τῆς τέχνης ... ἤδη γὰρ τελέοις ἀνδράσιν, οὓς ἐτίμησαν ἀρετῆς ἕνεκα, ἐκοινώνουν τῆς τέχνης, Gal. *De anat. admin.* 2.1 (281)); Edelstein 1943: 40.

[191] Nittis 1940, Edelstein 1943: 42, Nutton 2004: 69. Edelstein 1943: 39-48 argues that it follows Pythagorean practice.

(*Prt.* 311b-c)

> Suppose you intended to go to your namesake, Hippocrates the Coan, the Asclepiad, to pay him money as a fee for yourself, if someone asked you 'Tell me, Hippocrates, you are going to pay a fee to Hippocrates as him being what?', what would you answer?
> I would say, he said, as a doctor.
> So that you might become what?
> A doctor, he said.

Here there is no question of Plato's friend joining the family of Hippocrates of Cos, but just of paying for instruction, in the same way in fact that in the dialogue he is actually planning to pay Protogoras the sophist. Edelstein points out that a young aristocrat like the Athenian Hippocrates would be unlikely to join a family of craft workers.[192] Of course, Plato may not have been very familiar with the training of doctors, or have been twisting his account to make it similar to the sophists who are his actual target. Nevertheless, this is certainly a different model to that of the Hippocratic Oath.

As far as religious practitioners are concerned, there is an interesting account in Isocrates of Thrasyllus the seer:

> Θράσυλλος γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ τοῦ καταλιπόντος τὴν διαθήκην παρὰ μὲν τῶν προγόνων οὐδεμίαν οὐσίαν παρέλαβεν, ξένος δὲ Πολεμαινέτῳ τῷ μάντει γενόμενος οὕτως οἰκείως διετέθη πρὸς αὐτὸν ὥστ᾽ ἀποθνῄσκων ἐκεῖνος τάς τε βίβλους τὰς περὶ τῆς μαντικῆς αὐτῷ κατέλιπε καὶ τῆς οὐσίας μέρος τι τῆς νῦν οὔσης ἔδωκεν. λαβὼν δὲ Θράσυλλος ταύτας ἀφορμὰς ἐχρῆτο τῇ τέχνῃ: πλάνης δὲ γενόμενος καὶ διαιτηθεὶς ἐν πολλαῖς πόλεσιν
>
> (Isoc. 19.5-6)
>
> For Thrasyllus, the father of the testator, inherited nothing from his parents, but becoming a guest-friend of Polemaenetus the seer he became so close to him that when he died he left him his books on seercraft and gave him part

[192] Edelstein 1943: 40.

> of the present property. Thrasyllus took these and practiced the craft, becoming itinerant and living in many cities

Later, however, he is said to have 'learned his art from Polemaenetus the seer' (καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸς καὶ τὴν τέχνην ἔμαθε παρὰ Πολεμαινέτου τοῦ μάντεως, Isoc. 19.45), which suggests something more like an actual apprenticeship.[193]

In conclusion, therefore, we might imagine the private initiators to practice a craft analogous to that of physicians, and to recruit their number and pass on their techniques by a mixture of hereditary transmission within the family and some kind of apprenticeship. It will be apparent that this conclusion depends heavily on unprovable if plausible assumptions; even if we accept that we have two comparable crafts, we do not really know either that the conditions in each were similar or even that what applied to the seers and other groups mentioned above also applied to initiators, about whom we have no specific relevant information.

Nevertheless, I think that this view of the private initiators as religious craftsmen is the best attempt that can be made to provide a plausible context in which to view them.

[193] See Flower 2008: 26-7 for a sceptical interpretation. Flower's suggestion, however, that he may have been the illegitimate son of Polemaenetus has little support in the text.

8: Conclusion

Private initiation to secure a better fate in the afterlife offered an alternative model to the dominant type of religious activity in classical Greece, polis religion. It was operated by private itinerant practitioners for a fee, was optional and voluntary for the participants rather than expected of them from their social situation, and was designed to secure for them a personal benefit, if only after death. It may also have given greater emphasis to personal religious experience, though we have not as yet seen any evidence for this.

There were many types of private religious practitioner, of whom we have singled out the seer, the dealer in oracles, the chanter of incantations, the purifier, the magician and the necromancer, though these might often have been different names for the same persons. This provided a fertile environment for the appearance of the private initiators.

Three designations have been especially linked with these initiators. The ἀγύρτης, or beggar priest, occurring in one passage of Plato, is probably just a pejorative way of referring to what appears to be a composite picture of various magicians, purifiers and so forth, rather than anything especially connected with initiators. The ὀρφεοτελεστής, or celebrator of Orphic rites, is a rare term which is not clearly linked with initiation until several centuries after this period. The μάγος, or magus, on the other hand, is used of initiators in the Derveni Papyrus, though we do not know whether the term was generally established in this sense or confined to one particular group.

These private religious practitioners, including the initiators, appear to have been a craft group analogous to the physicians, and like them may well have

recruited and trained their personnel through a mixture of hereditary transmission in the family and some kind of apprenticeship or paid instruction.

Initiators and initiates seem to have included both men and women. Women were certainly initiated at Eleusis,[194] and the burials with gold leaves that I shall consider later in this study[195] are equally divided between males and females, where this can be ascertained.[196] As for the initiators, Glaucothea, mother of the orator Aeschines, seems to have taken part in some such activity (Dem. 18.259-60 = *OF*577),[197] and Plato refers to both men and women expounding a doctrine of metempsychosis: 'those of the priests and priestesses who take the trouble to be able to give a reason for what they do' (οἱ ... τῶν ἱερέων τε καὶ ἱερειῶν ὅσοις μεμέληκε περὶ ὧν μεταχειρίζονται λόγον οἵοις τ' εἶναι διδόναι, *Meno* 81a-b = *OF*424, 666).[198] There is a marked contrast with the division between male and female worship in standard polis religion.[199]

[194] Bremmer 2014: 2; Chapter Two section 5.

[195] Chapter Four, Chapter Seven section 4.

[196] Edmonds 2011b: 41-8. The texts use both masculine and feminine forms, but assessment is complicated by the appearance of masculine forms with female burials (B10), perhaps due to the use of standardised texts, and the disputed question of whether the feminine forms might refer to the soul (ἡ ψυχή, feminine) of the deceased (Zuntz 1971: 306, Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 59, Obbink 2011: 298n29, Bremmer 2016: 34). Women were also prominent in Pythagorean circles (Rowett 2014: 122-3) and Dionysiac maenadism (Edmonds 2004: 67-8; Chapter Three section 1 below).

[197] Chapter Three section 8.

[198] There were also women priestesses at Eleusis, the priestess of Demeter and Kore and the hierophantids (Clinton 1974: 68-76, 86-9). Women practiced magic (Ninos φίλτρα ποιούσης, schol. Dem. 19.281, Theoris τὴν φαρμακίδα, Dem. 25.79) and conducted purifications (for Theophrastus' superstitious man, ἱερείας καλέσας ... αὐτὸν περικαθᾶραι, Theophr. *Char.* 16, by Epicurus' mother, καθαρμοὺς, D.L. 10.4, in a play of Menander (Parker 2005: 121)).

[199] 'It would be an exaggeration to say that Athenian men and Athenian women had different gods, but the differences between the relation of the two sexes to the gods go deep', Parker 2005: 270.

As far as what these people offered to their clients, we have actually found only three pieces of evidence, two in Plato, and one in the Derveni Papyrus. From Plato we learn that they offered for a fee to procure for their clients a better fate in the next life: 'releases and purifications for misdeeds through sacrifices and childish pleasures, when they are still living and also when they are dead, which rites they call τελεταί, which free us from the evils there, while terrible things await those who do not sacrifice' (*Resp.* 364e-365a = *OF*573). They backed up their claims by writings ascribed to legendary figures. It may be that in some cases the better fate was specified as a pleasant and civilised symposium, and the worse as lying in mud or carrying water in a sieve.[200]

The Derveni Papyrus further tells us that they are not connected with the polis, that they warn against the horrors of Hades, that they perform initiations, for which they charge fees payable in advance, that these involve incantations and offerings to daimons and the souls of the dead, that they may also consult oracles and interpret dreams, that they do not always explain what they are doing adequately and that they are sometimes called magi.

We have also learned from the passage of the *Phaedo* (69c-d = *OF*576) with which I began this chapter, which quoted their saying 'many bear the narthex, but the Bacchi are few' (ναρθηκοφόροι μὲν πολλοί, βάκχοι δέ τε παῦροι), that

[200] Faraone 2008 suggests that they also received benefits in life, citing Eur. *Cyc.* 646-8 = *OF*814 which refers to a magic incantation of Orpheus known to the satyrs. There is no indication, however, that the satyrs are initiates, Orpheus was a likely figure to credit with such things, and the parallels he sees with Orphic myth (the Cyclops as child of Earth, the word δαλός, 'torch', possibly meaning 'thunderbolt') are tenuous. Kotansky 1991: 114-16, 2019: 533-4 discusses the use of the gold leaves (Chapter Four below) as amulets giving magical protection to the living, but as far as one can tell this seems to have been a secondary development; certainly the longer intelligible texts were not designed for amulets, and where they were so employed there is evidence of re-use (B1, A4) or the leaf itself is very late (A5).

there is a connection with Dionysus. The role of initiation in the rites of Dionysus will be considered in a later chapter.[201]

[201] Chapter Three.

Chapter Two

Contextual framework

1: Introduction

I want in this chapter to examine various aspects of the environment in which the private initiators operated. What was the concept of the soul that had passed down through tradition, literature and mythology? Was it thought to survive after death? If it did, what might the afterlife look like? There appears to be a good deal of information about the soul in the afterlife in the works of Plato, but what are the problems of using these philosophical dialogues as evidence?

It also seems relevant that the world in which the private initiators worked included the well-known public initiation cult of Eleusis, of which I therefore give a brief description. I want finally to look at the question of whether an Orphic movement formed a significant part of this environment, and to explain why, despite its prominence in modern scholarship, I am sceptical of this.

2: The soul

If we are examining the possible fate of human beings after death, we need to give some consideration to what it is of us that is supposed to survive. The normal present-day English term for this is the soul, and I shall accordingly use that here. Translating it into an ancient Greek equivalent is, however, not straightforward. There were a number of terms partially corresponding to our modern concept, they were used by different authors in different senses, the meanings changed over time, and the closest equivalent, ψυχή, though conventionally translated as 'soul', is by no means an exact match.[1]

In this section, I want to show that there had been a significant change in the idea of the soul by the fifth and fourth centuries BC, and also to look at what views were held on its possible survival after death. These were the presuppositions upon which initiation operated.

In Homer we do not find a single entity corresponding to the modern 'soul'. Instead there are a confusing variety of terms and concepts spanning what we might call 'soul', 'mind', 'heart' and so forth. They include:

(i) ψυχή[2] This is conventionally translated 'soul'. In Homer, however, it differs from what we think of as soul in that it has no role in humans during their life. It leaves temporarily during a faint: 'she fell backward and her *psyche* was breathed out' (ἤριπε δ᾽ ἐξοπίσω, ἀπὸ δὲ ψυχὴν ἐκάπυσσε, *Il.* 22.467).[3]

[1] I shall rely heavily on the careful analysis of Claus 1981, supplemented by Bremmer 1983, who tries to match the ancient terms with modern anthropological concepts. There are a number of studies of individual Homeric terms by Sullivan (1979, 1980, 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1996).

[2] Warden 1971, Sullivan 1979, Claus 1981: 61-2, Bremmer 1983: 14-17,74.

[3] Nehring 1947.

Otherwise it only appears when departing the body at death: 'the *psyche* of a man cannot be captured and come back when it has passed the barrier of his teeth' (ἀνδρὸς δὲ ψυχὴ πάλιν ἐλθεῖν οὔτε λεϊστὴ οὔθ᾽ ἑλετή, ἐπεὶ ἄρ κεν ἀμείψεται ἕρκος ὀδόντων, *Il.* 9.408-9). It leaves from the limbs (*Il.* 16.856, 22.362) or through the mouth (*Il.* 9.409) or a wound (*Il.* 14.518, 16.505). It is what survives after death: 'a phantom *psyche* is still in the halls of Hades, but with no mind at all within it' (τίς ἐστι καὶ εἰν Ἄϊδαο δόμοισι ψυχὴ καὶ εἴδωλον, ἀτὰρ φρένες οὐκ ἔνι πάμπαν, *Il.* 23.103-4).[4] It may be derived from ψύχω, to breathe or blow, and so have originally meant breath (so already Plato *Cra.* 399d-e).[5]

(ii) *εἴδωλον:*[6] Another term for the dead in Hades: 'the phantoms of the dead' (εἴδωλα καμόντων, *Od.* 24.14). It was a simulacrum of the living person: 'Apollo of the silver bow made an *eidolon* like Aeneas himself' (ὃ εἴδωλον τεῦξ᾽ ἀργυρότοξος Ἀπόλλων αὐτῷ τ᾽ Αἰνείᾳ ἴκελον, *Il.* 5.449-50).

(iii) *αἰών:*[7] Something like 'life-force', which leaves the body at death: 'let life depart from me in your city' (με καὶ λίποι αἰὼν ἐν πόλει ὑμετέρῃ, *Il.* 5.685-6). In the *Homeric hymn to Hermes* (42) it is used in a physical sense for 'marrow' (of a tortoise).[8]

[4] But the Homeric *psyche* was not always so mindless, as is pointed out by Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 77-80, citing such inconsistencies as the *psychai* blocking the entrance to Hades of the unburied Patroclus (*Il.* 23.72-3), the leading position among the dead that Odysseus ascribes to Achilles (*Od.* 11.485-6) and the fact that Ajax can recognise and understand Odysseus without drinking the blood as the other shades do (*Od.* 11.541-67). See also Edmonds 2013b: 252-7, 2014: 9-11.

[5] Nehring 1947: 108-13, Bremmer 1983: 21-4, but *LSJ s.v.* ψυχή VII is sceptical.

[6] Bremmer 1983: 78-80.

[7] Claus 1981: 11-12, Bremmer 1983: 15-16.

[8] Richardson 2010 *ad loc*.

(iv) *φρήν*:[9] 'Mind', the seat of thought: 'devise another better plan in their minds' (ἄλλην φράζονται ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μῆτιν ἀμείνω, *Il.* 9.423). It is also used in a physical sense as diaphragm or lungs: ''he drew the spear from the flesh, and the *phrenes* followed' (ἐκ χροὸς ἔλκε δόρυ, προτὶ δὲ φρένες αὐτῷ ἕποντο, *Il.* 16.504). In this sense it can contain the θυμός or ἦτορ: 'the *thumos* in your *phrenes* pitied' (ὀλοφύρεται ἐν φρεσὶ θυμός, *Il.* 8.202).

(v) *πραπίδες:*[10] This seems to be an occasional synonym of φρήν: 'with knowing mind' (ἰδυίῃσι πραπίδεσσι, *Il.* 1.608).

(vi) *νόος:*[11] Another term for mind. It is located in the chest (νόον ... ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν, *Il.* 4.309). It can also be used in a more abstract sense as 'reason': 'do not be angry beyond reason' (μὴ χαλέπαινε παρὲκ νόον, *Il.* 20.133).

(vii) *θυμός:*[12] This was situated in the φρήν: 'the *thumos* was gathered in the *phren*' (ἐς φρένα θυμὸς ἀγέρθη, *Il.* 22.475). It sometimes appears to be a kind of breath: 'breathing out his *thumos*' (θυμὸν ἀΐσθων, *Il.* 16.468). It was a kind of life-force or strength which fades away in exhaustion: 'there was little *thumos* still in me' (ὀλίγος δ' ἔτι θυμὸς ἐνῆεν, *Il.* 1.593). The seat of the emotions: 'you have put this anger in your *thumos*' (χόλον τόνδ' ἔνθεο θυμῷ, *Il.* 6.326), it is perhaps best translated as 'spirit' or 'heart'.

(viii) *μένος:*[13] This is situated in the chest (*Il.* 5.513), knees (*Il.* 17.451), φρένες (*Il.* 1.103) or θυμός (*Il.* 16.529). It is used for strength, courage and the fury of

[9] Ireland and Steel 1975, Claus 1981: 16-19, Bremmer 1983: 61-2, Sullivan 1988.

[10] Bremmer 1983: 62, Sullivan 1989a.

[11] Claus 1981: 19-21, Bremmer 1983: 56-7, Sullivan 1989b.

[12] Lynch and Miles 1980, Sullivan 1980, Claus 1981: 22, 37-42, Bremmer 1983: 54-6.

[13] Claus 1981: 24-5, 35-7, Bremmer 1983: 57-60.

battle: 'fleeing the *menos* and invincible hands of Aias' (Αἴαντος προφυγόντα μένος καὶ χεῖρας ἀάπτους, *Il.* 7.309). It can be used of forces of nature: 'the force of the sun' (μένος ἠελίοιο, *Il.* 23.190). Its privative ἀμενηνός is used of the wounded (*Il.* 5.887) or dead: 'strengthless heads of the dead' (νεκύων ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα, *Od.* 10.521). It is difficult to translate, but perhaps 'force' or 'spirit' come closest.

(ix) *κῆρ:*[14] 'Heart' in the mental rather than physical sense. It overlaps with θυμός, and was like it situated in the φρήν (*Od.* 18.344), or actually in the θυμός itself (*Il.* 6.523-4). It too can be used for life-force, or for emotions such as anger, courage or grief: 'grieving at heart' (ἀχνύμενος κῆρ) occurs frequently in the *Odyssey*. The phrase περὶ κῆρι is used to mean 'very much': 'I honoured at heart sacred Ilios' (μοι περὶ κῆρι τιέσκετο Ἴλιος ἱρὴ, *Il.* 4.46).

(x) *ἦτορ:*[15] Another term that may be translated 'heart'. It may be located in the chest (*Il.* 22.452), φρένες (*Il.* 17.111) or κραδίη (*Il.* 20.169). The seat of emotions and also thought, it is loosened at times of emotional crisis: 'her knees and *etor* were loosened' (τῆς δ᾽ αὐτοῦ λύτο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ, *Od.* 4.703).

(xi) *κραδίη:*[16] The physical heart: 'he fixed his spear in his heart' (δόρυ δ᾽ ἐν κραδίῃ ἐπεπήγει, *Il.* 13.442). It can also be used for feelings, especially associated with courage: 'my *kradie* and proud spirit urge me on' (ἔμ᾽ ὀτρύνει κραδίη καὶ θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ, *Il.* 10.220).

[14] Claus 1981: 22-3, 26-33, Bremmer 1983: 63.

[15] Claus 1981: 23-4, 33-5, Bremmer 1983: 63, Sullivan 1996.

[16] Claus 1981: 42-5, Bremmer 1983: 63.

The important point for our purposes that emerges so far from this survey is that there was not really in Homer a concept of the soul in the modern sense of something that both carried our personality during life and might survive our physical death.

The usage of these terms, however, changed considerably after Homer.[17] Some, such as μένος, κῆρ and ἦτορ, fall out of use altogether. φρήν is less frequent, and often occurs in attempts to mimic Homeric style (e.g. Hdt. 3.155), νόος tends to mean 'intention' in stereotyped phrases such as ἐν νόῳ ἔχειν (e.g. Hdt. 1.27), θυμός becomes an emotion, 'anger' or 'spirit' (e.g. Thuc. 1.49.3), and καρδία takes on a new meaning of 'life' (eg. Eur. *Hec.* 1026).

The ψυχή has now moved into the leading role. We shall indeed see a case, in the *Pythagorean Notebooks*,[18] where the θυμός, νόος and φρένες are considered merely as parts of the ψυχή.[19] The ψυχή, which we may now refer to as 'soul' in something like the modern sense, has become the seat of the personality or essence of the living person. Some examples of this new usage: Anacreon says to his loved one 'you are the charioteer of my soul' (τὴς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς ἡνιοχεύεις, Anac. 4), Heraclitus says that a drunk 'has a moist soul' (ὑγρὴν τὴν ψυχὴν ἔχων, DK22B117), Pindar speaks of 'men whose souls are superior to possessions' (κτεάνων ψυχὰς ἔχοντες κρέσσονας ἄνδρες, *Nem.* 9.32-3), the unmarried daughters of Proteus in Bacchylides enter Hera's sanctuary 'with still virgin souls' (παρθενίᾳ γὰρ ἔτι ψυχᾷ, 11.47-8), and an unwilling listener in Sophocles is asked 'does it sting in your ears or in your soul?' (ἐν τοῖσιν ὠσὶν ἢ 'πὶ τῇ ψυχῇ δάκνει;, *Ant.* 317). It is essential to human

[17] Assmann 1926, Claus 1981: 48-56.

[18] Chapter Seven section 2.

[19] νοῦς, θυμός and ἐπιθυμία in other Pythagorean writings: Burkert 1972: 74.

life: 'the soul gives mortal bodies life as long as it is in them' (τὰ θνητὰ σώματα ὅσον ἂν ἐν αὐτοις χρόνον ᾖ ἡ ψυχή, ζῶντα παρέχεται, Xen. *Cyr.* 8.7.19).

Aristotle provides a great deal of information on his predecessors' views on the soul in the *De anima* (403b-405b). Thales thought magnets had souls, as they could move iron (405a). Heraclitus said it was a fluid, incorporeal (ἀσωματώτατὸν) exhalation (ἀναθυμίασιν, 405a).[20] The Pythagoreans believed that specks of dust in the air (ξύσματα, 404a), or at least what moved them, were souls. Alcmaeon said that souls were immortal because they were always moving (ἀεὶ κινουμένη, 405a). Anaxagoras held that soul was what moved things (ψυχὴν εἶναι λέγει τὴν κινοῦσαν, 404a) and that either it or mind (τὸν νοῦν) were the cause of beauty and rightness (τοῦ καλῶς καὶ ὀρθῶς, 404b).[21] Democritus thought that soul and mind were identical, and also spherical (405a). Their view of the soul was linked to their view of the primary substance: Hippo held that soul was water (405b),[22] Critias that it was blood (405b), Diogenes of Apollonia that it was air (405a),[23] Democritus that it was fire (403b-404a) and Empedocles that it was formed out of all the elements (404b).

Unfortunately, however, Aristotle's account needs to be treated with some scepticism. Aristotle's shortcomings as a historian of philosophy, and his tendency to re-interpret his predecessors' work as imperfect attempts to

[20] But cf. DK22B36, 45, 117, 118. 'For soul it is death to become water' (ψυχῇσιν θάνατος ὕδωρ γενέσθαι, DK22B36) might suggest that he regarded it as fire; Rohde 1925: 367-71, Claus 1981: 125-38.

[21] The fragments of Anaxagoras preserved by Simplicius ascribe this primacy to mind (DK59B6, 9, 11-14).

[22] He thought it originated from semen produced in the brain, according to Hippolytus (DK38A3); Zhmud 2014: 100, 104.

[23] Claus 1981: 139-40; Diogenes may also be the author of DK13B2 attributed to Anaximenes (Claus 1981: 121-5).

realise his own ideas, have often been pointed out since the classic work of Cherniss.[24] He may therefore be systematising and perhaps distorting passing references to a concept that was not central to the ideas of these thinkers.[25]

Aristotle also mentions another theory of the soul: 'they say it is a harmony, and the harmony is a mixture and synthesis of opposites, and the body is composed of opposites' (ἁρμονίαν γάρ τινα αὐτὴν λέγουσι· καὶ γὰρ τὴν ἁρμονίαν κρᾶσιν καὶ σύνθεσιν ἐναντίων εἶναι, καὶ τὸ σῶμα συγκεῖσθαι ἐξ ἐναντίων, *De an.* 407b). This seems to be the same conception we find in Plato: 'our body is strung and held together by hot and cold and dry and wet and suchlike, and the mixture and harmony of these is our soul, if they are mixed with each other correctly and proportionately' (ἐντεταμένου τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν καὶ συνεχομένου ὑπὸ θερμοῦ καὶ ψυχροῦ καὶ ξηροῦ καὶ ὑγροῦ καὶ τοιούτων τινῶν, κρᾶσιν εἶναι καὶ ἁρμονίαν αὐτῶν τούτων τὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῶν, ἐπειδὰν ταῦτα καλῶς καὶ μετρίως κραθῇ πρὸς ἄλληλα, *Phd.* 86b-c). Plato puts this doctrine in the mouth of Simmias, a pupil of the Pythagorean Philolaus, and so it has been attributed to the Pythagoreans, but the other evidence for this is weak and it is difficult to reconcile the concept with the soul's immortality, also ascribed to the Pythagoreans.[26]

The medical writers occasionally refer to the soul. In *Airs, waters, places*, where it is used interchangeably with γνώμη, 'disposition', it is the seat of courage and endurance (τὸ δὲ ἀνδρεῖον καὶ τὸ ταλαίπωρον ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, *Aër.* 24), which vary according to the climate.[27] In *On regimen*, where the term occurs most frequently, it is a mixture of fire and water (πυρὸς καὶ ὕδατος

[24] Cherniss 1935, see also Guthrie 1957, Collobert 2002.

[25] Claus 1981: 105-7.

[26] Graham 2014: 62-3, Palmer 2014: 212-13, Zhmud 2014: 106.

[27] Claus 1981: 150-1, Bartoš 2015: 173-4.

ξύγκρησιν, *Vict.* 1.25), which can be modified by the appropriate diet and regimen, and seems to originate in the sperm.[28] It is what takes over when the body is asleep (*Vict.* 4.86-8).[29]

As to whether the soul was immortal and continued to exist after death, as the old Homeric ψυχή did, there was no consensus.[30] The term did continue to be used in certain contexts for that of us which lives after death: 'even dead he has a pleasant life in his soul' (καὶ φθίμενος ψυχῇ τερπνὸν ἔχει βίοτον, Ion DK36B4). Pherecydes in the sixth century, according to Cicero, was the first (presumably first philosopher) to maintain its immortality (*Pherecydes Sirius primus dixit animos esse hominum sempiternos*, *Tusc.* 1.16.38).[31] Xenophon's Cyrus asks 'do you think that honours to the dead would continue if their souls had power over nothing?' (τοῖς δὲ φθιμένοις τὰς τιμὰς διαμένειν ἔτι ἂν δοκεῖτε, εἰ μηδενὸς αὐτῶν αἱ ψυχαὶ κύριαι ἦσαν;, *Cyr.* 8.7.18). Pindar is more ambiguous when he tells his soul not to desire immortal life (μή, φίλα ψυχά, βίον ἀθάνατον σπεῦδε, *Pyth.* 3.61-2), though this does imply that it is the soul that would survive if anything did. I shall deal with the special case of immortality through metempsychosis in a later chapter.[32]

Immortality was, however, far from a universal belief. It was quite natural to speak of the soul as something that perished (ἀπόλλυται ψυχή, Eur. *Hec.* 21-2; ἡ δ' ἐμὴ ψυχὴ πάλαι τέθνηκεν, Soph. *Ant.* 559-60). In the *Republic*, when Socrates asks Glaukon if he does not realise that the soul is undying and never

[28] Claus 1981: 151-3, Bartoš 2015: 185-212.

[29] Claus 1981: 152n22, Bartoš 2015: 201-7. On a possible connection to metempsychosis, see below Chapter Five section 2.

[30] Parker 2005: 363-8.

[31] Bernabé 2013b: 127.

[32] Chapter Five below.

perishes (ἀθάνατος ἡμῶν ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ οὐδέποτε ἀπόλλυται, 608d), 'he stared at me in amazement and said "No, by god, I did not!"' (ὃς ἐμβλέψας μοι καὶ θαυμάσας εἶπε: μὰ Δί', οὐκ ἔγωγε). In the *Phaedo* it is said that people generally believe that when the soul leaves the body it no longer exists anywhere (τὰ δὲ περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς πολλὴν ἀπιστίαν παρέχει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις μή, ἐπειδὰν ἀπαλλαγῇ τοῦ σώματος, οὐδαμοῦ ἔτι ᾖ, 70a). I do not here have space to embark on the major topic of Plato's own view of the soul, though I shall consider in a later section[33] the question of how Plato's mythical treatments of the soul can be used as evidence.

This necessarily selective sketch has tried to show how by the fifth and fourth century BC the concept of the soul had developed from the range of mental and life forces we find in Homer, of which ψυχή was only one and not the most important, into an idea of a ψυχή that carries in some sense the essence or personality of us, and that there were some, if perhaps a minority, who believed that this, like the Homeric ψυχή, could survive after death. This was an essential precondition of the possibility of gaining a better fate in the afterlife through initiation.

[33] Section 4 below.

3: The topography of the afterlife

In this section I want to look at popular and mythological conceptions of the lot of the soul after death, in order to set the context in which the offer of a better fate might be viewed. If the soul did in some form survive death, to what kind of place was it supposed to go?

The usual answer was to Hades. Hades (Ἀΐδης, Ἅιδης and other spellings) was the name of both the god of the underworld and of his realm.[34] There are many passing references to Hades in classical literature, but the main sources we have from and before this period for what it may have been like are five: Homer, especially the visit of Odysseus to the realm of the dead in the eleventh book of the *Odyssey*,[35] the *Theogony* of Hesiod, the description by Pausanias (10.28-31) of the fifth-century picture by Polygnotus in the *lesche* of the Cnidians at Delphi,[36] the parodic treatment of the visit of Dionysus to the underworld in Aristophanes' *Frogs*,[37] and the account of Plato in the *Phaedo*

[34] The meaning perhaps moved through phrases like 'the house of Hades' from the god to the place.

[35] Sourvinou-Inwood plausibly suggests that this may not be typical of contemporary beliefs, and that its portrayal of the dead as witless shades (ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα, 11.49) is inconsistent with other indications in Homer (Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 77-83; for criticism of this approach, see Edwards 1985: 218-19n9). On the so-called Deuteronekyia in Book 24, which may be a later addition to the *Odyssey*, see Heubeck 1992: 356-8, Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 94-106, Albinus 2000: 82-6.

[36] Rohde 1925: 241-2, Albinus 2000: 132-4.

[37] Rohde 1925: 240-1, Albinus 2000: 135-7, Edmonds 2004: 111-58.

(112e-113c).[38] From these it is possible to build up a picture of the topography.[39]

Hades was under the earth: 'the halls of Hades under the depths of the earth' (Ἄϊδαο δόμοις ὑπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης, Hom. *Od.* 24.204), 'Hades who dwells under the earth' (Ἀίδην, ὃς ὑπὸ χθονὶ δώματα ναίει, Hes. *Th.* 455). Much further below Hades was Tartarus,[40] with the roots of earth and sea (γῆς ῥίζαι πεφύασι καὶ ἀτρυγέτοιο θαλάσσης, Hes. *Th.* 728). There were entrances to Hades from the upper world (πλουτώνια) in various caves, for example at Tainaron or the river Acheron in Thesprotia.[41]

The *Odyssey* might seem an exception to this, as the house of Hades is located in the west on the edge of the stream of Ocean, where Odysseus beaches his ship (*Od.* 10.508-15), but probably we are meant to think of some kind of entrance there to the world below.[42] Ocean was conceived as a river encircling the whole world (γῆν περὶ πᾶσαν ῥέειν, Hdt. 4.8.2). The entrance to Hades to which Circe directs Odysseus is by the poplars and willows (μακραί τ' αἴγειροι καὶ ἰτέαι, 10.510) of the groves of Persephone (ἄλσεα Περσεφονείης, 10.509) and the mist-shrouded city of the Cimmerians (11.14-15);[43] later we are told it is past the gates of the sun and the land of dreams (παρ' Ἠελίοιο πύλας καὶ δῆμον ὀνείρων, 24.12). It is not at first sight clear on which bank of Ocean the entrance is, but as we are told that it is impossible to approach by land, but

[38] Edmonds 2004: 159-220.

[39] The combination of epic and later sources seems justified in a survey of popular mythology by the continued prominence of Homer and Hesiod in fourth and fifth century culture and education.

[40] Hom. *Il.* 8.13-16, Hes. *Th.* 119, 720-44, West 1966: 194-5.

[41] Rohde 1925: 186-7n23, Albinus 2000: 69n9.

[42] On the west as a location for the dead, see Wagenvoort 1971: 115-19.

[43] On the Cimmerians, see Heubeck 1989: 77-9.

only by ship (11.156-9), it seems it must be on the outer bank, separated by Ocean from our world.[44]

The separation of the other world from us by water is a persistent theme, though the details vary. The ψυχή of Patroclus looks forward to joining the others 'beyond the river' (ὑπὲρ ποταμοῖο, Hom. *Il.* 23.73). In Hesiod only the Styx is mentioned, a branch of Ocean (*Th.* 775-7, 787-9),[45] though in Pausanias' account of the picture of Polygnotus the river is Acheron (Paus. 10.28.1), while in Aristophanes there is a lake that is crossed by Dionysus in Charon's ferry (though his slave is able to walk round it in the same time) (*Ran.* 136-72).[46] There seems to be only one body of water in these cases, but elsewhere there are more. Odysseus is told by his mother of 'great rivers and terrible streams between' (μέσσῳ γὰρ μεγάλοι ποταμοὶ καὶ δεινὰ ῥέεθρα, Hom. *Od.* 11.157) and Pindar refers to 'sluggish streams of murky night' (βληχροὶ δνοφερᾶς νυκτὸς ποταμοὶ, fr. 130 = *OF*440). Circe's instructions to Odysseus go into more detail: 'there the Pyriphlegethon and the Cocytus, a branch of the water of the Styx, flow into the Acheron' (ἔνθα μὲν εἰς Ἀχέροντα Πυριφλεγέθων τε ῥέουσιν Κώκυτός θ', ὃς δὴ Στυγὸς ὕδατός ἐστιν ἀπορρώξ, Hom. *Od.* 10.513-14). The names suggest hate (Styx), misery (Acheron), wailing (Cocytus) and

[44] *Contra*, Heubeck 1989: 78, who supposes a far shore to be non-existent. I am sceptical of Heubeck's further contention that Odysseus goes on to make a complete circuit of the river. Though it would be logical that if he went to Hades with the current it would be against him returning the same way, we are told that he used oars and a favourable wind (11.649), and something as striking as a circumnavigation of the world would surely be made more explicit.

[45] Kirk 1985: 236-7, Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 59-63.

[46] The figure of Charon seems to have been introduced by the beginning of the sixth century; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 304-9.

flame (Pyriphlegethon).[47] There is a white rock where the rivers meet (Hom. *Od.* 10.515, 24.11).

Homer's picture is difficult to visualise: we seem to have one river (the Styx) dividing, with part but not all of it (the Cocytus) flowing into another river (the Acheron). It was perhaps to clarify this that Plato introduces a rather more elaborate arrangement in the *Phaedo* (112e-113c),[48] in which there are two sets of rivers flowing in opposite directions, and two lakes, the Acherousian and the Styx, here turned into a lake apparently to make better sense of the Homeric account. This version appears to be Plato's own invention.

Aristophanes mentions a Stygian rock and a crag of Acheron (*Ran.* 470-1), perhaps *ad hoc* inventions too, and also a plain of Lethe (*Ran.* 186), or Forgetfulness. This recurs in Plato's myth of Er (*Resp.* 621a), where it contains the Careless River (Ἀμέλητα ποταμόν, 621a), also called the river of Lethe (τῆς Λήθης ποταμόν, 621c), at which the souls drink to forget their previous lives.[49]

Proceeding further, we come to various formidable creatures, multitudes of snakes and terrible wild beasts (ὄφεις καὶ θηρί' ὄψει μυρία δεινότατα, Ar. *Ran.* 143-7), the demon Eurynomos who devours the flesh of corpses (Paus. 10.28.7), and the shape-changing demon Empousa (Ar. *Ran.* 288-95). The dead are in meadows of asphodel (ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα, Hom. *Od.* 11.539, 24.13, cf. Diod. 1.86.7).[50] Those who commit serious crimes such as sacrilege

[47] Mackie 1999: 487.

[48] Pender 2012: 210-14. Kingsley (1995: 79-87) observes that Plato's account bears some resemblance to Sicily.

[49] See below, Chapter Five section 5. Rohde 1925: 249-50n21, Wagenvoort 1971: 130-1. Cf. *Anth. Pal.* 7.25 (Λήθης δόμων) and Lucian *Dial. Mort.* 13.6 (Λήθης ὕδωρ), also Paus. 9.39.8 (Λήθης ὕδωρ), not in Hades, but at the oracle of Trophonius.

[50] Albinus 2000: 132.

and mistreating their fathers (Paus. 10.28.4-5, 10.31.11-12, Dem. 25.52-3) are punished in various ways,[51] including lying in the mud (βόρβορον πολὺν, Ar. *Ran.* 145) (Aristophanes says also in dung, but this is likely to be comic exaggeration).[52]

The realm of Hades is commonly described as a house: 'the wide-gated house of Hades' (εὐρυπυλὲς Ἄϊδος δῶ, Hom. *Il.* 23.74), 'the dank house of Hades' (Ἀίδεω ... δόμον εὐρώεντα, Hom. *Od.* 10..512), 'the halls of Hades' (Ἄϊδαο δόμοις, Hom. *Od.* 24.204), 'the echoing halls of powerful Hades' (δόμοι ἠχήεντες ἰφθίμου Ἀίδεω, Hes. *Th.* 767-8), 'the dank house of chilly Hades' (εὐρώεντα δόμον κρυεροῦ Ἄίδαο, Hes. *Op.* 153).[53] The adjectives characterise it as both impressive, the seat of a powerful god, and unpleasant. In Aristophanes' parody (*Ran.* 460-78), it has a doorkeeper and otherwise seems like a normal Athenian house. The entrance is guarded by Cerberus, a fearsome multi-headed dog, who fawns on those entering, but devours anyone who tries to leave (Hes. *Th.* 311-12, 769-74, Ar. *Ran.* 467-8).[54]

If all the dead are inside the house of Hades, and at least some of them are on the meadows of asphodel or lying in mud, then the mud and the meadow must be inside the house, which is difficult to visualise; they may be alternative conceptions, but it is perhaps also an indication that we should not look for a too literal interpretation of these glimpses of the next world.

[51] Rohde 1925: 241-2, Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 67-9, Edmonds 2013b: 257-9.

[52] Fabiano 2010: 149-52, however, suggests a deeper connection between excrement and the underworld.

[53] Bremmer 2016: 35.

[54] Rohde 1925: 244n56.

So far, the setting of the afterlife has seemed uniformly miserable. There is, however, another aspect, at least for a favoured few, that is alluded to in various sources, including Homer (*Od.* 4.561-9), Hesiod (*Op.* 167-73), Pindar (*Pyth.* 10.37-44)[55] and Aristophanes (*Ran.* 154-6, 449-59). This depicts an idyllic existence. Again, I shall combine the accounts to build up an overall picture of the traditional view.

Instead of the characteristic gloom of Hades, they enjoy the sunlight (ἥλιος καὶ φέγγος ἱλαρόν ἐστιν, Ar. *Ran.* 455-6), as the sun shines with a beautiful light just as in our world (φῶς κάλλιστον ὥσπερ ἐνθάδε, Ar. *Ran.* 155). The climate is temperate, without rain, snow or winter (οὐ νιφετός, οὔτ' ἂρ χειμὼν πολὺς οὔτε ποτ' ὄμβρος, Hom. *Od.* 4.566) and with gentle breezes (Ζεφύροιο λιγὺ πνείοντος ἀήτας, Hom. *Od.* 4.567). There are flowery meadows and myrtle groves (λειμῶνας ἀνθεμώδεις, Ar. *Ran.* 450, μυρρινῶνας, Ar. *Ran.* 156), and fruit (μελιηδέα καρπὸν, Hes. *Op.* 172). The inhabitants are entertained with the music of pipe (καναχαὶ τ' αὐλῶν, Pind. *Pyth.* 10.39, αὐλῶν ... πνοή, Ar. *Ran.* 154) and lyre (λυρᾶν τε βοαὶ, Pind. *Pyth.* 10.39) and with dancing maidens (χοροὶ παρθένων, Pind. *Pyth.* 10.38). Here they live without care (ἀκηδέα θυμὸν ἔχοντες, Hes. *Op.* 170), toil or strife (πόνων δὲ καὶ μαχᾶν ἄτερ, Pind. *Pyth.* 10.42).[56]

In those passages in Pindar which refer to the innovative doctrine of metempsychosis (*Ol.* 2.61-83 = *OF*445, frr. 129-31 = *OF*439-42),[57] the picture is just the same. The sun shines strongly (λάμπει μὲν σθένος ἀελίου, Pind. fr. 129 = *OF*439) in equal days and nights (ἴσαις δὲ νύκτεσσιν αἰεί, ἰσαις δ' ἐν

[55] On the Hyperboreans, in a very early poem (Kirkwood 1982: 235), which seems unlikely to reflect anything but traditional views.

[56] The main features of Greek utopias are summarised in Mace 1996: 237.

[57] Chapter Five section 2.

ἀμέραις ἅλιον ἔχοντες, Pind. *Ol.* 2.61-2 = *OF*445).[58] There are sea breezes (ὠκεανίδες αὖραι περιπνέοισιν, Pind. *Ol.* 2.71-2 = *OF*445), flowery meadows (φοινικορόδοις ... λειμώνεσσι, Pind. fr. 129 = *OF*439, ἄνθεμα δὲ χρυσοῦ φλέγει, Pind. *Ol.* 2.72 = *OF*445), and fruit in abundance (χρυσέοις καρποῖς βεβριθός, Pind. fr. 129 = *OF*439). The inhabitants are entertained with music (φορμίγγεσσι τέρπονται, Pind. fr. 129 = *OF*439) and occupy themselves with the pastimes they enjoyed in life,[59] such as riding, athletics and draughts (τοὶ μὲν ἵπποις γυμνασίοις <τε>, τοὶ δὲ πεσσοῖς, Pind. fr. 129 = *OF*439). Here they live without toil (λυσίπονον, Pind. fr. 131 = *OF*441).[60]

Who, then, qualified for this desirable fate? The sea-god Proteus in the *Odyssey* explains to Menelaus that he will be selected as the husband of Helen and so son-in-law of Zeus (οὕνεκ' ἔχεις Ἑλένην καί σφιν γαμβρὸς Διός ἐσσι, *Od.* 4.569).[61] This criterion would leave a very select group of inhabitants; in Homer even a great hero like Achilles with a divine mother remains in a miserable condition in Hades (*Od.* 11.488-91). In Hesiod, however, it appears that of his fourth race of heroes, some died (that is, went to Hades) and others were allowed the better fate (τοὺς μὲν θανάτου τέλος ἀμφεκάλυψεν, τοῖς δὲ δίχ' ἀνθρώπων βίοτον καὶ ἤθε' ὀπάσσας, *Op.* 166-7).[62] He does not say who were so privileged, or how they were selected. In later writers Achilles is usually regarded as one of these,[63] and Medea, who is said to have married

[58] It is not clear what this means: perhaps perpetual sunshine, or day here while night on earth, or unchanging seasons in perpetual equinox (Willcock 1995 *ad loc*).

[59] Edmonds 2015: 556-7.

[60] The main features of Greek utopias are summarised in Mace 1996: 237.

[61] See West 1988 *ad loc*.

[62] The distinction is omitted in some papyri; reasons for preserving it are given by West 1978 *ad loc*. Cf. Rohde 1925: 74-6.

[63] Edwards 1985: 221.

Achilles there.[64] Harmodius the tyrannicide is another, joining Achilles and Diomedes according to an Attic drinking song (*PMG* 894).

By Pindar the scope had further widened, as he speaks both of 'the good' (ἐσλοὶ, *Ol.* 2.63 = *OF*445), and of those who have undergone rites to release them from toil (λυσίπονον τελετάν, fr. 131 = *OF*441), and Aristophanes explicitly calls them initiates (οἱ μεμυημένοι, *Ran.* 159), here referring to initiates of Eleusis.[65] This is a significant development, and transforms what started as mythology remote from humankind into something anyone can achieve, as we shall see throughout this study.

The location of this paradise is, however, variable. In some cases, it seems to be part of, or adjacent to, Hades itself.[66] In the painting of Polygnotus (Paus. 10.28-31), and the parody of Aristophanes (*Ran.* 136-58, 312-59) those with a happy fate are mixed up with those with an unpleasant one, though this may be due to the demands of the dramatic or pictorial medium.

The most popular location, however, is the Isles of the Blessed (μακάρων νῆσοι). We meet them in Hesiod (*Op.* 167-73), where they are located at the ends of the earth (ἐς πείρατα γαίης, 168) by deep-whirling Ocean (171) under the rule of Kronos (173a). Possibly 'Isles of the Blessed' originally meant 'Isles of the Blessed Gods',[67] but already in Hesiod, where they are described as 'far

[64] By Ibycus (fr. 291) and Simonides (fr. 588) in schol. Ap. Rhod. 4.814-15a.

[65] As is shown by Graf 1974: 40-50; see also Brown 1991.

[66] Edmonds 2013b: 261.

[67] Rohde 1925: 74-6, West 1978: 193-4.

from the immortals' (τηλοῦ ἀπ' ἀθανάτων, *Op.* 173a),[68] the epithet must be applied to the heroes who inhabit them.

An alternative was the Elysian plain (Ἠλύσιον πεδίον) [69] to which Menelaus was destined in Homer (*Od.* 4.563), described as at the ends of the earth (πείρατα γαίης), where Rhadmanthys rules.[70] The name seems pre-Greek.[71] Another possibility was the White Headland (λευκή ακτή, Eur. *Andr.* 1262, *IT* 436) or Island to which Achilles was carried when snatched from the pyre by Thetis in the *Aethiopis* (ἡ Θέτις ἀναρπάσασα τὸν παῖδα εἰς τὴν Λευκὴν νῆσον διακομίζει, Procl. *Chrestomathia* 199).[72] The land of the Hyperboreans in the far north seems to have had a similar function (Bacchyl. 3.58-61, Pind. *Pyth.* 10.38-44).[73] By Hellenistic times, the idea had grown up of a kind of heaven in the sky. Already in Aristophanes the dead might become stars: 'Is it not how they say, that we become like stars in the heavens when we die? Yes. So who's a star there now?' (οὐκ ἦν ἄρ᾽ οὐδ᾽ ἃ λέγουσι, κατὰ τὸν ἀέρα ὡς ἀστέρες γιγνόμεθ᾽, ὅταν τις ἀποθάνῃ; -- μάλιστα. -- καὶ τίς ἐστιν ἀστὴρ νῦν ἐκεῖ;, Ar. *Pax* 832-3); a Pythagorean saying of uncertain date located the Isles of the Blessed in the sun and moon (Iambl. *VP* 82).[74]

[68] But see Rohde 1925: 76, West 1978 *ad loc* for the possibility that this line is an interpolation.

[69] The Elysian plain is also in Ibycus (fr. 291) and Simonides (fr. 588) in schol. Ap. Rhod. 4.814-15a.

[70] For Rhadamanthys as indicating a Cretan origin, see West 1988 *ad loc*; *contra* Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 32-49.

[71] Bremmer 2002: 137n47, correcting a supposed connection with ἐνηλύσιος, 'struck by lightning'.

[72] Edwards 1985: 215, 221. For other such translations, see Rohde 1925: 64-5.

[73] Brown 2011: 22-3.

[74] Burkert 1972: 359-68.

Generally, these locations were mutually exclusive alternatives, though in Pindar (*Ol.* 2.56-83 = *OF*445), we do get two grades of idyll, one in or near Hades and the other, for a more select group, on the Islands of the Blessed, apparently his attempt to combine traditional ideas with the beliefs of his patron on metempsychosis.[75] Those, Pindar says, who successfully complete three reincarnations[76] follow the road of Zeus to the tower of Kronos (Διὸς ὁδὸν παρὰ Κρόνου τύρσιν, *Ol.* 2.70 = *OF*445) on the islands. There is no mention of a sea journey, so we perhaps should not take the reference to a road too literally.[77] Inhabitants include Rhadamanthys, Peleus, Cadmus and Achilles (Pind. *Ol.* 2.75-83). Elsewhere in Pindar, we seem to be close to the traditional Hades: after describing the 'lovely place' (ἐρατόν ... χῶρον) he adds 'thence sluggish streams of murky night belch out unlimited dark' (ἔνθεν τὸν ἄπειρον ἐρεύγονται σκότον βληχροὶ δνοφερᾶς νυκτὸς ποταμοὶ, fr. 130 = *OF*440).

Overall, then, we have a picture, vague and contradictory in many details, but with a basic consistency, of what the topography of the afterlife was thought to look like in mythology and traditional belief. The clear distinction that emerged between the miseries of gloomy Hades and the idyllic fate of the privileged is especially significant. How far this was considered to be a literally true account of the afterlife, and how far just a kind of fairy tale, or something in between the two, we do not know. It is what had been transmitted through mythology, poetry and traditional tales, and must have formed part of everyone's world view, whether they accepted it or not. It is something like

[75] Solmsen 1968.

[76] Discussed below, Chapter Five section 2.

[77] Burkert notes that some pictorial portrayals do, however, show the departing dead accompanied by sea-creatures (Burkert 1972: 359-60).

this that the clients of the private initiators were likely to have had in the backs of their minds when offered the prospect of a better fate in the world to come.

4: Myths of Plato on the soul

The works of Plato constitute one of the main contemporary sources of information on views of the soul and afterlife in the classical period. Their use, however, presents certain methodological problems. In this section, I want to analyse what these are and to come to a preliminary assessment of where this material can be validly employed as evidence, which will inform its use in subsequent discussions of particular topics.

Plato's myths of the soul are scattered throughout his works, and give a very varied picture, sometimes speaking of its fate in Hades, sometimes of its reincarnation in a new body. As we shall see, they are all introduced by him with a purpose, to support his arguments for the immortality of the soul and the need to live a good life. Their interest for us in the present enquiry lies in the fact that they seem to incorporate facets of contemporary beliefs on these matters, and can therefore be used as evidence for them, if what is authentic evidence can be disentangled from what is invented by Plato for his own purposes. My aim here is to set out the principles on which this can be done, and eventually arrive at certain conclusions as to what can be used as valid evidence of contemporary belief and what can not.

I wish to look at various accounts of a more or less mythological nature, which for simplicity I shall generally describe as myths, which are introduced by Plato to support whatever philosophical argument he is engaged in at the time. Some are comparatively brief passing references, while others are extended and elaborated accounts; as we shall see, they are not intended to be compatible with each other. I believe that thirteen, which I list in something

like the order in which Plato may have written them,[78] are relevant to the topic of the soul and afterlife:

(i) *Gorgias* 492e-493c = *OF*430, 434, 668. Are human beings really dead, and is death really life? An ingenious Sicilian or Italian told a fable of the uninitiated in Hades carrying water in a sieve.

(ii) *Gorgias* 522e-527a = *OF*460. The three judges of the dead, Minos, Rhadamanthus and Aeacus.[79]

(iii) *Meno* 81a-c = *OF*424, 666. The soul is immortal and has been reborn many times. Persephone, as Plato reports Pindar saying, accepts requital for ancient wrongs and restores the souls of heroes to the sun.

(iv) *Phaedo* 62b = *OF*429, 669. Life is a kind of prison or guard post, from which we humans must not release ourselves by suicide.

(v) *Phaedo* 63b-c. Socrates will go to the company of good men and gods after death.

(vi) *Phaedo* 69c-d = *OF*434, 549, 576, 669. The initiated will live with the gods after death, while the uninitiated will lie in mud.

(vii) *Phaedo* 70c-d = *OF*428. The souls of the dead are reborn and live again.

[78] On the chronology, see Thesleff 1989, Howland 1991, Altman 2010. The broad distinction between early, middle and late dialogues seems generally agreed, even if the details are uncertain, and there is also the possibility of subsequent revision by Plato. As to the possibility of a development in his views over time as reflected in these myths, one can note that the later ones are longer and more elaborate, and that metempsychosis, though present from the beginning, takes a more central role, but otherwise it seems difficult to identify any change.

[79] Discussion in Dodds 1959: 372-6, Annas 1982: 122-5.

(viii) *Phaedo* 80d-82c. Souls are reborn in bodies corresponding to their former life; only the soul of the philosopher will live with the gods.

(ix) *Phaedo* 107d-108c, 113d-114c. The fate of the soul after death depends on its good or bad actions in life. Five groups are distinguished, with fates ranging from confinement in Tartarus to dwelling in places of indescribable beauty.[80]

(x) *Republic* 614b-621b = *OF*461-2, 1037, 1077. Myth of Er. Extended account of how souls after death are punished or rewarded for their actions in life. Each soul chooses its own reincarnation; some choose well, others badly.[81]

(xi) *Phaedrus* 246a-249b = *OF*459. The human soul is like two horses, one divine, one earthly, and a charioteer. Souls are reincarnated in different forms, according to their merits.

(xii) *Timaeus* 42b-d, 91a-92c. Souls are created as stars, then incarnated as men. Those who fail to live a good life are successively reborn as women and animals.

(xiii) *Laws* 903b-904d. Souls are joined now to one body, now another. Souls of the good end up after death in the higher regions, of the wicked in lower regions such as Hades.

It seems likely that much of the detail that Plato presents in these myths is created by him, either with a view to supporting his argument or indeed

[80] Discussion in Edmonds 2004: 159-220, Pender 2012.

[81] For the myth of Er in general, see Annas 1981: 344-53, Annas 1982: 129-38, Ferrari 2009.

through sheer pleasure in telling stories.[82] *Mythoi* are generally characterised by him as false but plausible.[83] The afterlife in particular is an area where he believes that truth is unattainable, but myths can be used instead not because of their truth but because of the importance of the moral we can deduce from them (*Phd.* 114d).[84] I shall look at later some of the disclaimers he uses to emphasise this point. Dodds has analysed the *Gorgias* myth to show how it may have been constructed from a number of sources, including Homer, Pindar and the Pythagoreans.[85]

The problem with using these myths as evidence can then be simply stated. Plato has no interest in putting them forward for our information; he just wishes to make and support a philosophical argument. The question I am attempting to answer is how we distinguish what in his accounts is based on current contemporary doctrines, that would be recognised as such by his audience, or by some of his audience, and what is his own invention.[86]

I should like first to consider these accounts in three aspects. What is the argument in which Plato is engaged at the point in the dialogue that he introduces the myth? What is the source that he claims for his story? And what view of the soul and the afterlife does it appear to be evidence for? We can then proceed to make a preliminary estimate of their value.

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[82] See Wright 1979 for a general discussion.

[83] Wright 1979: 364-6.

[84] Wright 1979: 369.

[85] Dodds 1959: 372-6.

[86] For general surveys of the myths, see Brisson 1999, Morgan 2000, Inwood, M. 2009 and Ward 2013. They are understandably concerned with the significance of the myths for Plato's philosophy, not as evidence for the history of religion. For an approach closer to my own, see Edmonds 2004: 101-71 and Edmonds 2014. For the development of Plato's concept of the soul, see Claus 1981, Bremmer 1983 and Lorenz 2008.

The arguments that Plato is engaged in when he introduces the myth, and therefore the purpose for which he introduces it, are surprisingly consistent between the dialogues. They can be reduced to two: the immortality of the soul, and the value of living a virtuous and especially a philosophical life.

As was noted above,[87] Plato regarded the immortality of the soul as a doctrine that would not be readily accepted. He says that people generally believe that when the soul leaves the body it no longer exists anywhere (*Phd.* 70a), and Glaukon in the *Republic* is amazed when Socrates claims that it is undying (*Resp.* 608d). Clearly, any myth of the afterlife at least presupposes survival after death, and can therefore be brought in to support his claim. In the *Meno* 81a-c he first calls unnamed priests and Pindar[88] as witnesses for immortality and metempsychosis, and then goes on to treat this as proved ('since therefore the soul is immortal and has lived many times', ἅτε οὖν ἡ ψυχὴ ἀθάνατός τε οὖσα καὶ πολλάκις γεγονυῖα, 81c).[89] The metaphor of the chariot and the account of the judgment of souls in the *Phaedrus* 246a-249b is preceded by a philosophical exposition of the doctrine of immortality (245c-246a). A similar motive can be seen in the *Phaedo* 62b (argument against suicide), 63b-c (why Socrates is not grieving at the approach of death) and 70c-d, where an ancient account (παλαιὸς λόγος, 70c) of metempsychosis is put forward as a sufficient proof (ἱκανὸν τεκμήριον, 70d) of the soul's existence after death.

Even more important is the use of these myths to support Plato's arguments for living a virtuous life. The myths in the *Gorgias,* here not involving reincarnation, are explicitly said to be designed to induce Socrates'

[87] Section 2.

[88] See Bluck 1958b on reincarnation in Pindar.

[89] Cf. *Leg.* 870d5-e2 = *OF*433; Betegh 2014: 157.

interlocutor to choose an orderly over an intemperate life (ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀπλήστως καὶ ἀκολάστως ἔχοντος βίου τὸν κοσμίως καὶ τοῖς ἀεὶ παροῦσιν ἱκανῶς καὶ ἐξαρκούντως ἔχοντα βίον ἑλέσθαι, 493c), and to prevent him going to the next world with injustice in his soul.[90] The *Meno* myth is said to prove that you should make your life as holy as possible (δεῖν δὴ διὰ ταῦτα ὡς ὁσιώτατα διαβιῶναι τὸν βίον, 81b), and we find similar motives in the *Phaedo* (107d-114c), the *Timaeus* (42b-d) and the myth of Er (*Resp.* 614b-621b). In each case, the myth shows this by representing the fate of the virtuous after death as different from and better than the rest. Luckily for Plato, the lot of the philosopher is especially happy: '"the narthex bearers are many, the Bacchoi few", and these in my opinion are none other than the true philosophers' ('ναρθηκοφόροι μὲν πολλοί, βάκχοι δέ τε παῦροι:' οὗτοι δ᾽ εἰσὶν κατὰ τὴν ἐμὴν δόξαν οὐκ ἄλλοι ἢ οἱ πεφιλοσοφηκότες ὀρθῶς, *Phd.* 69c-d); 'those sufficiently purified by philosophy live altogether without bodies for the succeeding time and come to even more beautiful dwellings' (τούτων δὲ αὐτῶν οἱ φιλοσοφίᾳ ἱκανῶς καθηράμενοι ἄνευ τε σωμάτων ζῶσι τὸ παράπαν εἰς τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον, καὶ εἰς οἰκήσεις ἔτι τούτων καλλίους ἀφικνοῦνται, *Phd.* 114c).

We can therefore see, by examining the arguments Plato was trying to support by these accounts, what might be the kind of elaborations he would have had a motive for importing into existing and traditional stories. Before considering this, however, it may be instructive to examine the sources he alleges for his myths. These are various. In some, it is a traditional tale ('an old wives' tale', μῦθός ... ὥσπερ γραὸς, *Grg.* 527a; 'an old story we remember', παλαιός τις λόγος οὗ μεμνήμεθα, *Phd.* 70c), or simply 'it is said' (λέγεται, *Phd.* 107d).

[90] 'The worst of all evils is for the soul to go to Hades full of much injustice. If you wish, I should like to tell you a story to show this is so', πολλῶν γὰρ ἀδικημάτων γέμοντα τὴν ψυχὴν εἰς Ἅιδου ἀφικέσθαι πάντων ἔσχατον κακῶν ἐστιν. εἰ δὲ βούλει, σοὶ ἐγώ, ὡς τοῦτο οὕτως ἔχει, ἐθέλω λόγον λέξαι, *Grg.* 522e.

Sometimes it is some wise person, intelligent priests and priestesses, inspired poets (ὅσοι θεῖοί εἰσιν) such as Pindar (both *Meno* 81a-b), or an ingenious man (κομψὸς ἀνήρ) from Sicily or Italy (*Grg.* 493a). Sometimes it is a source connected with the mysteries, whether Eleusis or private mysteries is not clear ('said in what is not to be repeated', ἐν ἀπορρήτοις λεγόμενος, *Phd.* 62b; 'those who established the mystery rites', οἱ τὰς τελετὰς ἡμῖν οὗτοι καταστήσαντες, *Phd.* 69c; 'just as is said among the initiates', ὥσπερ δὲ λέγεται κατὰ τῶν μεμυημένων, *Phd.* 81a). In other cases, Plato simply puts forward the story without giving a source (*Phd.* 63b-c, *Resp.* 614b, *Phdr.* 246a-249b).

It may be that these sources, or some of them, are more or less genuine, and scholars have spent some effort in attempts to trace, for example, Pythagoreans behind the wise persons or Empedocles behind the ingenious Sicilian.[91] It is, however, difficult to see any clear relation between the myth related and the alleged source, and it seems to me more plausible that all these sources are merely inventions by Plato to lend an air of verisimilitude to his stories. In the judgment of Most: 'Even if it seems highly probable, or even evident, to us that a certain myth was invented by Plato, he likes to pretend that it is a genuine excerpt from the real reservoir of oral legends present in Greek culture'.[92] Possibly the source he invents will be one that he considers most likely for his tale, as initiates for those mentioning initiation, or someone from Magna Graecia for the metempsychosis associated with figures from that area.

[91] Pythagoreans: Burkert 1972: 78n157, Huffman 2013: 252-4. Sicilian or Italian: Kingsley 1995: 113-14, Edmonds 2013b: 272-3. ἀπορρήτοις: Strachan 1970.

[92] Most 2012: 17.

I suggest, therefore, that the myths are primarily inventions by Plato, which, however, have a basis in a common stock of ideas that would be familiar both to him and to his audience. I think that support for this view can be found in the care he takes to add disclaimers to show that they are not to be taken literally: 'this is pretty ridiculous' (ταῦτ' ἐπιεικῶς μέν ἐστιν ὑπό τι ἄτοπα, *Grg.* 493c); 'perhaps this seems to you a story an old woman might tell and you will despise' (τάχα δ' οὖν ταῦτα μῦθός σοι δοκεῖ λέγεσθαι ὥσπερ γραὸς καὶ καταφρονεῖς αὐτῶν, *Grg.* 527a); 'what they say is as follows; you judge if it seems to you true' (ἃ δὲ λέγουσιν, ταυτί ἐστιν: ἀλλὰ σκόπει εἴ σοι δοκοῦσιν ἀληθῆ λέγειν, *Meno* 81b); 'to affirm confidently that these things are as I have recounted would not be fitting for a man of sense' (τὸ μὲν οὖν ταῦτα διισχυρίσασθαι οὕτως ἔχειν ὡς ἐγὼ διελήλυθα, οὐ πρέπει νοῦν ἔχοντι ἀνδρί, *Phd.* 114d).

The theme common to almost all these myths is that of rewards awaiting certain people in the afterlife.[93] Usually these are the virtuous, who have lived a good life (*Grg.* 522e-527a, *Phd.* 63b-c, 107d-114c, *Resp.* 614b-621b, *Phdr.* 246a-249b). Sometimes, by contrast, they are initiates (*Grg.* 492e-493c, *Phd.* 69c-d, 81a), but even here Plato contrives to equate them with the virtuous and philosophical: 'these [initiates] in my opinion are none other than the true philosophers' (οὗτοι δ᾽ εἰσὶν κατὰ τὴν ἐμὴν δόξαν οὐκ ἄλλοι ἢ οἱ πεφιλοσοφηκότες ὀρθῶς, *Phd.* 69d); 'the thoughtless [he called] uninitiate' (τοὺς δὲ ἀνοήτους ἀμυήτους, *Grg.* 493a); similarly, in *Phaedo* 81a the initiates are equated with the philosophers.

The other major theme is that of metempsychosis (*Meno* 81a-c, *Phd.* 70c-d, 107d-114c, *Resp.* 614b-621b, *Phdr.* 246a-249b, *Ti.* 42b-d, 91a-92c). We also learn of the body as a prison (*Grg.* 492e-493c, *Phd.* 62b, cf. *Cra.* 400b-c =

[93] For an analysis of the typical narrative pattern, see Betegh 2009: 84-5.

*OF*430, 667), and in the final myth of the *Phaedo*, which appears something of a rag-bag of disparate contemporary beliefs, there is reference to personal daimons for each living person (107d, also *Resp.* 620d-e), psychopomps leading the soul to Hades (107e) and to funeral rites (θυσιῶν τε καὶ νομίμων, 108a) and their effect on the dead. The Platonic doctrine of anamnesis appears in *Meno* 81c (ἀναμνησθῆναι, ἅ γε πρότερον ἠπίστατο, 'to recollect what she [the soul] knew before'), and probably again in *Republic* 621a.

It will not have escaped the reader's notice that many of these myths are incompatible with one another. The incompatibilities are of various types: (i) details of the judgments and reincarnations in the longer accounts, (ii) the contradiction between salvation for initiates and salvation for the good and virtuous, (iii) incompatibility between the concept of metempsychosis, where a soul's deserts affect how or how often it is reborn,[94] and the concept of a fate in the other world where sinners go to Tartarus or Hades and the good to the Isles of the Blessed, (iv) the contrast between the soul's immortality and an alternative theory put forward by Plato of the soul as a harmonic blending of elements (*Phd.* 86b-d, 88d),[95] (v) more generally, the whole relation of these myths to the theory of Ideas.[96] Again, we see that Plato is not outlining some consistent underlying theory, but rather picking up scraps of various theories he has heard and using them as a base for the invention of different persuasive stories to bolster his arguments.[97]

[94] Annas 1982: 129 raises the problem the soul's forgetting its past lives might have for this.

[95] Zhmud 2014: 106.

[96] Rohde 1925: 468-9.

[97] Bluck 1958a and 1958b assumes a consistent underlying theory, but gets into considerable difficulty trying to reconcile everything. Proclus had already faced the same problem in trying to construct a unified myth of reincarnation; Edmonds 2013b: 285-6.

To summarise our conclusions so far, Plato uses these myths to support his arguments that the soul is immortal and that the good, virtuous and philosophical will be rewarded. He claims sources for them in traditional tales, wise men, priests and poets, and the mystery rites, but we saw reason to suspect that these sources may have been invented. The content of the myths centres on rewards for the good, or sometimes the initiates, together with metempsychosis, but they are not consistent with each other. Can we now go ahead to conclude what in Plato's myths is of value as evidence for contemporary views of the soul and the afterlife? This will perhaps inevitably involve an element of personal judgment, but I shall try to give an answer. I should like to set out five conclusions:

1. The basic ideas underlying the greater part of these myths were familiar ones.

If they were not, then the superstructure that Plato builds on them would not have been likely to be persuasive. By the basic ideas I mean the concept of an afterlife in which some have a better fate than others and the concept of transmigration of souls. It does not follow, of course, that everyone would have accepted these ideas, but the fact that he introduces them again and again without feeling the need to justify them as something new and unfamiliar does indicate that he would expect his audience to have heard of them.

2. The details of the longer myths were inventions by Plato.

As I observed above, the details of what happens to the souls after death in the *Gorgias, Phaedo, Republic*, *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus* are radically different from each other. In the *Republic*, *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus* they are reincarnated; in the *Gorgias* and *Phaedo* they are sent to Tartarus or wherever

according to their merits, though the details of their fate do not, however, match between these latter two. Judgment in the *Gorgias* is by Minos, Rhadamanthus and Aeacus (523e), but Er in the *Republic* is confronted by judgment at the Spindle of Necessity (616c). The souls choose their own reincarnation in the *Republic*, but in the *Phaedrus* they are allotted to nine groups (perhaps meant to be illustrative of a larger number). These details differ so much from each other that they must all be essentially inventions by Plato.

3. Anything especially adapted to Plato's argument is suspect.

I think we should also look with suspicion on anything that seems especially adapted to support the arguments he is making at this point in the dialogue. That the good are rewarded after death and the bad punished is one of his central themes, and while it might reflect a widespread contemporary view, it is equally probable that it was brought in or emphasised by Plato to support his case. The same would apply to what seem to be references in the *Meno* myth to the doctrine of anamnesis expounded in that dialogue, that knowledge is not only innate, but has been forgotten from a previous life, an idea which may be original to Plato.[98] It is again alluded to in the *Republic,* where those with good sense (φρονήσει) drank sparingly of the waters of forgetfulness (621a).

4. Anything which conflicts with the case he is making is likely to be authentic.

This is the converse of the previous conclusion. As we have seen, he feels it necessary on occasion to mention the prospect of a better life for initiates

[98] For anamnesis, see Scott 1987. For attempts to show that anamnesis is in fact Pythagorean, see Kahn 2001: 50-1, Cornelli 2013: 26.

rather than the good, but then to explain this away by claiming the initiates are really the good. We might therefore conjecture that posthumous reward for initiates was in fact more familiar to his audience than reward for the good. Again, he introduces the doctrine that human life is a prison (ὡς ἔν τινι φρουρᾷ ἐσμεν οἱ ἄνθρωποι), only to dismiss it as incomprehensible (οὐ ῥᾴδιος διιδεῖν, *Phd.* 62b). As it adds nothing to his argument, it is likely to be a true report; similarly, the σῶμα/σῆμα pun in the *Gorgias* (493a).

5. Other casual references are likely to be authentic.

This is an extension of the previous conclusion. The concepts of a personal daimon for each human, a psychopomp to lead the dead to Hades, or the effect of funeral rites on the dead are introduced briefly into the *Phaedo* myth (107d-108c) and add nothing significant to the story; similarly that the judges of the dead are called Minos, Rhadamanthus and Aeacus (*Grg.* 523e) is traditional.[99] As Plato had no motive for supplying them, they are likely to be ideas of common knowledge added for local colour.

These principles should provide a guide to distinguishing what is authentic in Plato's myths from what is his own invention and form a base on which Plato's evidence can be used to good effect in the chapters that follow.

[99] Minos already in Homer *Od.* 11.568-71. For the development of his co-judges, see Rohde 1925: 246-8n13.

5: Eleusis and the public mysteries

Fig. 1. The Telesterion at Eleusis

Fig. 2. The Niinion Tablet

By Carole Raddato from FRANKFURT, Germany - Terracotta votive plaque dedicated by Ninnion to the two great goddesses of Eleusis, middle of 4th century BC, Archaeological Museum of Athens, Greece, CC BY-SA 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=37877936

My focus in this study is on private initiators who offered the prospect of a better fate in the next world. The best-known and most prestigious example of this in the classical Greek world was, however, a public cult, that of Eleusis. This was well established when the private practitioners appeared, and it is reasonable to conjecture that it formed a pattern which they followed, at least in part. It will therefore be useful as a comparison to say something about what we know of the mysteries at Eleusis.[100]

[100] Book-length studies include Foucart 1914, dated but still the fullest treatment of many aspects, Mylonas 1961, Clinton 1974, Clinton 1992, Cosmopoulos 2014 and Cosmopoulos

Although preceded by Lesser Mysteries, which took place at Agrai in Athens in the month of Anthesterion in the spring, about which we know little, the main events occurred annually in the autumn, from the 15th to the 22nd of Boedromion. The sequence began in Athens and ended at the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in Eleusis, 18 km to the northwest, and part of Athenian territory (*Fig. 1*). Initiation was open to non-Athenians, to women and to slaves, only barbarians and murderers being excluded, and it seems likely that several thousand people took part each year. Fees were payable to the officials, and each initiand was allotted a mystagogue or guide. A sacred truce was proclaimed across Greece to allow travel to the ceremony. The participants each washed a piglet in the sea before sacrificing it, as part of a purification ritual.[101] They proceeded on a subsequent day in elaborate procession, on foot and in carriages, to Eleusis, with ceremonies including ritual insults at the bridge over the Kephisos. At Eleusis the actual initiation took place. Initiates had the option of returning the following year to advance into a further grade, the *epopteia*.[102]

As befits a state festival, the priests had quasi-official, sometimes hereditary, status. We have seen the contrast with the private initiators in the previous chapter. The chief officiants, the Hierophant or shower of the sacred things and the Dadouchos or torch-bearer, were hereditary in the Athenian families

2015. There are short introductory surveys in Parker 2005: 342-63, Bowden 2010: 26-48 and Bremmer 2014: 1-20, which has valuable references to more recent work. The summary in the following paragraph is collected from all of the above.

[101] See below, Chapter One section 3, on private practitioners who offered purification.

[102] The one-year interval is clear from Plut. *Dem.* 26 (ἀπὸ τῶν μεγάλων ἐνιαυτὸν διαλείποντες), so Foucart 1914: 432, Mylonas 1961: 274, Clinton 1992: 86. I do not know why Bremmer (2014: 11) and Cosmopoulos (2015: 24) seem to assume that this formed part of the original initiation.

of the Eumolpids and Kerykes respectively. Other officials included the priestess of Demeter and Kore, two hierophantids and the sacred herald.[103]

It has sometimes been suggested that the origins of the cult of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis go back to Mycenean times. Mylonas and Travlos, who excavated the site, were of this opinion.[104] Although there is indeed some evidence of ritual practices in the Mycenean Megaron B at Eleusis,[105] there is nothing to link this to Demeter, a goddess who is not mentioned in Linear B.[106] Recent research has now revealed continuing, if limited, use of the site in the succeeding period,[107] but the main change may have coincided with the architectural reorganisation that appears to have taken place around the beginning of the sixth century.[108]

The role of Kore/Persephone as the daughter of Demeter also seems comparatively late. In Homer (*Od.* 11-12) Persephone is just the queen of the underworld.[109] They first appear as mother and daughter in a continuation of Hesiod of doubtful date (*Th.* 912-14).[110] The earliest artistic representation of the *anodos* or return to the upper world of Kore is not until the fifth century.[111] The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter,*[112] the best-known account of the myth of the

[103] On all of these see Clinton 1974.

[104] Mylonas 1961: 7-105, Travlos 1973.

[105] Cosmopoulos 2003: 18-20.

[106] Darcque 1981: 599.

[107] Cosmopoulos 2015: 158-9, *contra* Darcque 1981: 599.

[108] Sourvinou-Inwood 1997: 141, Cosmopoulos 2015: 164.

[109] Binder 1998: 136-7.

[110] West 1966: 397-9, Binder 1998: 137.

[111] Edwards 1986: 313.

[112] Richardson 1974, Clinton 1986, Clinton 1992: 28-37, 96-9, Foley 1994, Clay 2006.

abduction of Kore by Hades, the search for her by Demeter, and her return, appears to date to the sixth century.[113] There are, however, significant differences between the story of the hymn and the version apparently current at Eleusis, for example the episode of Demophon in the hymn, the major role it has for Hekate and the minor role for Eumolpus,[114] which might indicate that at that date the cult was not well established.

The conquest of Eleusis by Athens and its taking over of the mysteries related by Pausanias (1.38.3) is assigned by him to the mythical time of Erechtheus,[115] and there is no reason to suppose it reflects any historical reality.[116] The mysteries were in fact integrated into the religious system of the Athenian polis and came under the archon *basileus*.[117] The cult at Eleusis would fit well into the pattern of countryside cults in Attica established by Athens, perhaps as a way of marking out its territory.[118] By the fifth century it was certainly panhellenic (*IG* I^3 6),[119] something that it is tempting to link with the policies of the Peisistratids in the late sixth century; there was a parallel and possibly contemporaneous development towards establishing the Great Panathenaia as a panhellenic festival.

[113] Richardson 1974: 5-11.

[114] Clinton 1986. It is therefore not quite accurate to describe the *Hymn* as 'the foundation myth of the Mysteries' (Bremmer 2014: 10).

[115] For similar accounts see Sourvinou-Inwood 1997: 141-2.

[116] Herodotus (1.30) mentions a fight against the neighbours in Eleusis (μάχης πρὸς τοὺς ἀστυγείτονας ἐν Ἐλευσῖνι), but this was probably against the Megarians.

[117] Sourvinou-Inwood 1997: 145.

[118] Parker 1996: 25.

[119] Clinton 1994: 162-3.

As to what actually took place in the initiation ceremony, we know very little, as secrecy was strictly enforced.[120] Alcibiades was recalled from the command of the Sicilian expedition on a charge of revealing the mysteries (Thuc. 6.27-8, 60, Plut. *Alc.* 19-21). There are reports of death sentences for even accidental breaches of the rule of secrecy,[121] and Pausanias (1.38.7) felt unable, after a warning dream, even to describe the monuments of the sanctuary.

The site of Eleusis was excavated by Kouroniotes, Mylonas and others in the 1930s,[122] but it is difficult to get much clue from the buildings as to what occurred in them; at most certain possibilities can be ruled out as impracticable. There is a considerable body of inscriptions,[123] but this naturally relates to the public part of the cult. Artistic representations such as the Niinnion Tablet (*Fig. 2*),[124] the Regina Vasorum and the Lakrateides Relief have been used as evidence,[125] but these are difficult to interpret, and as they were likely to be seen by non-initiates could not contain anything very revealing.

Literary evidence is sparse. I have already mentioned the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and suggested that it may differ in some ways from the developed

[120] The problem is discussed in Foucart 1914: 358-65, Mylonas 1961: 224-8, Richardson 1974: 304-8 and Clinton 1992: 90-1. For explanations of the secrecy as due to the great holiness of the rites see Bremmer 2014: 17-18, though this might seem to beg the question of why these rites held this position when other religious acts did not.

[121] Schol. Ar. *Av.* 1073-4 (Diagoras the Melian), Livy 31.14 (youths entering the sanctuary by accident). Aeschylus was popularly supposed to have narrowly escaped a similar fate; Mylonas 1961: 227, Lefkowitz 1981: 68.

[122] Mylonas 1961; see also Travlos 1973, Darcque 1981, Binder 1998 and Cosmopoulos 2003, 2014, 2015.

[123] Clinton 2005-8.

[124] Or Ninnion Tablet. Demeter and Kore are shown top centre, but some of the other identifications are disputed (Clinton 1992: 73-5).

[125] Clinton 1992 is the major study of the iconography.

cult. There are references in many classical authors, but they seldom tell us anything specific. Descriptions of the parodies of the mysteries with which Alcibiades and Andocides were charged may provide clues about what they are parodying.

The situation changes with the advent of Christianity. Church Fathers such as Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Lactantius and Asterios were obviously not constrained by any pagan prohibition, and tell us a great deal about the mysteries that we do not find in any other source. The problem is to decide how much of this is true. It is often far from clear what cult they are describing, if they had any real knowledge of it, and how far in their polemical zeal for their cause they had any concern to provide an accurate picture.

The one thing that is clear, however, is that the mysteries at Eleusis offered an improved fate in the afterlife. Already in the *Homeric Hymn*, after Demeter has established her rites there, we read:

> ὄλβιος ὅς τάδ’ ὄπωπεν ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων·
> ὅς δ’ ἀτελὴς ἱερῶν, ὅς τ’ ἄμμορος, οὔ ποθ’ ὁμοίων
> αἶσαν ἔχει φθίμενός περ ὑπὸ ζόφῳ εὐρώεντι.
>
> (*Hymn. Hom. Cer.* 480-2)

> Whoever of men on earth sees these things is blessed, but he who does not accomplish[126] or share in the holy things does not have the same fate after death beneath the mouldy darkness.

[126] Richardson 1974 *ad* 481 would translate as ‘uninitiated’ (so also *LSJ s.v.* ἀτελής IV), but it is not clear that the passage from Plato (*Phdr.* 248b) that he cites in support necessarily has this meaning.

ὄλβιος, which I have translated as 'blessed', is used by Hesiod (*Th.* 96) in the general sense of 'happy, fortunate', but later becomes almost a technical term for the happiness of initiates in the mysteries.[127]

This is confirmed by other authors. 'He who goes under earth having seen this is blessed', says Pindar (ὄλβιος ὅστις ἰδὼν κεῖν' εἶς' ὑπὸ χθόν', fr. 137a = *OF*444). Sophocles, too, says that 'those mortals who have seen these rites and go to Hades are thrice blessed, for they alone have life there, the others have all evils' (ὡς τρισόλβιοι κεῖνοι βροτῶν οἳ ταῦτα δερχθέντες τέλη μόλως' ἐς Ἅιδου· τοῖσδε γὰρ μόνοις ἐκεῖ ζῆν ἔστι, τοῖς δ' ἄλλοισι πάντ' ἔχει κακά, fr. 837 Radt). Isocrates speaks of 'the rite of which those participating have pleasanter hopes for the end of life and all eternity' (τὴν τελετήν, ἧς οἱ μετασχόντες περί τε τῆς τοῦ βίου τελευτῆς καὶ τοῦ σύμπαντος αἰῶνος ἡδίους τὰς ἐλπίδας ἔχουσιν, *Paneg*. 28).

Crinagoras, in the first century BC, recommends initiation 'from which you will have freedom from care in life and a lighter spirit when you join the dead' (τῶν ἄπο κὴν ζωοῖσιν ἀκηδέα, κεῦτ' ἂν ἵκηαι ἐς πλεόνων, ἔξεις θυμὸν ἐλαφρότερον, *Anth. Pal.* 11.42). Cicero says the mysteries provide not only how to live in joy, 'but even to die with a better hope' (*sed etiam cum spe meliore moriendi*, *De leg.* 2.36). The memorial to the second-century AD hierophant Glaukos says 'the mystery from the blessed ones is fine, that death is not only not evil to mortals, but good' (ἥ καλὸν ἐκ μακάρων μυστήριον, οὐ μόνον εἶναι τὸν θάνατον θνητοῖς οὐ κακὸν, ἀλλ' ἀγαθόν, *IG* II^2 3661, II.5-6).

There therefore appear to be two things offered: a greater happiness in life and the hope of a better fate after death. The nature of the greater happiness

[127] Richardson 1974 *ad* 481 collects examples. The Latin equivalent is *beatus*; Apul. *Met.* 11.16.2. See also Lévêque 1982.

in life is not specified; it may mean that you will be happier in life if death holds no terrors for you, or it may just refer to the joyous effects of the initiation experience. Neither do we know precisely in what way the initiate would be better off in the next life, just that their lot would be better than that of non-initiates.[128]

As to the actual ceremony, the name of the chief officiant, the hierophant, must mean the one who shows the sacred things,[129] whatever these may have been, confirmed by the description of Alcibiades in his parody 'wearing a robe just like the hierophant wears when he shows the sacred things' (ἔχοντα στολὴν οἵανπερ ὁ ἱεροφάντης ἔχων δεικνύει τὰ ἱερά, Plut. *Alc.* 22.3). He also spoke: Andocides, another accused, allegedly assumed the hierophantic robes and 'spoke what is forbidden' (εἶπε τῇ φωνῇ τὰ ἀπόρρητα, [Lys.] 6.51), and we hear of 'the utterances from the *anaktoron*[130]' (τὰς ἐξ ἀνακτόρου φωνὰς, Philostr. *VS* 2.20) in connection with a hierophant.

The initiands may have been blindfolded during the proceedings.[131] μύστης, initiate, has been derived from μύω, to close the eyes or lips, and the implied contrast with ἐπόπτης, spectator, the higher grade of initiate, has made the

[128] For some inconclusive speculation see Mylonas 1961: 283-5, Richardson 1974 *ad* 367-9, Burkert 1983: 293-6, Sourvinou-Inwood 1997: 154. Bremmer 2014: 18-19 suggests that the importance of the eschatological aspects of the mysteries may have been overstated, and that in many respects they were closer to a fertility ritual, with the return of Kore symbolising the renewal of the crops. There were certainly elements of both, but the hopes for the afterlife were well-attested, and it is these that concern me here.

[129] Clinton 1974: 46.

[130] Usually thought to be a part of the *telesterion*, or main temple of the site (*Fig. 1*), though Clinton argues that it is a synonym for the *telesterion* itself (Clinton 1992: 126-32).

[131] Clinton 1992: 86, Clinton 1993: 188-19, Clinton 2003: 50, Clinton: 2007: 343, Burkert 1983: 275, Dowden 1980: 413-17.

eyes seem more likely.[132] The μυσταγωγός who was assigned to lead each initiate would then have had a practical as well as a spiritual function.

A gong was apparently struck during the ceremony. According to Apollodoros, in the second century BC, 'the hierophant, when Kore is summoned,[133] strikes the so-called gong' (τὸν ἱεροφάντην, τῆς Κόρης ἐπικαλουμένης, ἐπικρούειν τὸ καλούμενον ἠχεῖον, *FGrHist* 244 F110). This is probably what is referred to by Pindar, 'bronze-rattling Demeter' (χαλκοκρότου ... Δαμάτερος, *Isthm.* 7.3),[134] and Velleius Paterculus, 'a nocturnal sounding of bronze, such as is produced in the rites of Ceres (*nocturno aeris sono, qualis Cerealibus sacris cieri solet*, 1.4.1).

An admittedly late source, Lactantius in the third to fourth century AD, suggests that the initiands may have conducted a ritual search:[135]

> *His etiam Cereris simile mysterium est, in quo, facibus accensis, per noctem Proserpina inquiritur, et ea inventa, ritus omnis gratulatione ac taedarum iactatione finitur.*
>
> (*Div. inst. epit.* 23 = Migne *P.L.* vi.1030)
>
> The mystery of Ceres is also similar in which with lighted torches they seek Proserpina throughout the night, and when she is found the whole rite ends with thanksgiving and throwing of torches.

[132] Roussel 1930: 53-7, Dowden 1980: 413-17. On blindfolding on other initiatory cults: Clinton 1992: 86, Clinton 2003: 70n2.

[133] Not 'calls for help' as Foucart 1914: 462, taking ἐπικαλουμένης as middle; Mylonas 1961: 264n170.

[134] For alternative interpretations see Clinton 1974: 47n276.

[135] Dowden 1980: 486, Bremmer 2014: 10-11.

Ritual searches are known from other Greek cults: in Samothrace they searched for Harmonia, in Samos for the statue of Hera, on Mount Larysion for out-of-season grapes and at Chaironea for Dionysus.[136]

Bright light and torches were certainly connected with the climax of the ceremony. The second most prominent sacred official was the dadouchos, or torch-bearer.[137] In the *Homeric hymn* Demeter carried torches (αἰθομένας δαΐδας μετὰ χερσὶν ἔχουσα, 48, 61), they were associated in art with both goddesses and with the minor Eleusinian deities Iacchus and Eubouleus[138] and they were carried by the initiates in the *Frogs* (λαμπάδας ἐν χερσὶ, Ar. *Ran.* 340). Later inscriptions speak of 'torch-bearing Kore' and 'nights shining finer than the sun' (Κούρης δαιδηφόρου ... νύκτες ... ἡελίου κάλλει λαμπόμεναι, *IG* II^2 4058), 'bright nights from the shining Anaktoron' (ἀνακτόρου ἐκ προφανέντα νυξίν ἐν ἀργενναῖς, *IG* II^2 3811), 'Demeter who brings light to mortals' (φαεσίμβροτα Δηοῦς, *IG* II^2 3661) and 'the hierophant from the radiant Anaktoron' (τῷ μὲν ἀπ' αἰγλήεντος ἀνακτόρου ἱεροφάντῃ, *IG* II^2 3709).[139]

Initiation is often held to be a fearful experience, based on this passage of Plutarch, comparing the fears of the soul to those of the initiates:

> πάσχει πάθος οἷον οἱ τελεταῖς μεγάλαις κατοργιαζόμενοι ... πλάναι τὰ πρῶτα καὶ περιδρομαὶ κοπώδεις καὶ διὰ σκότους τινὲς ὕποπτοι πορεῖαι καὶ

[136] Sourvinou-Inwood 2003: 31-2, Clinton 2003: 67. Cf. Aelius Aristides after the destruction of the sanctuary, νῦν δέ σοι ζητεῖν ὁ νεὼς λείπεται (*Or.* 19 p.422 Dindorf = 22.11 Behr).

[137] Clinton 1974: 47-68.

[138] Mylonas 1961: 210-13, Foley 1994: 38, Clinton 1992: 64-73.

[139] Bremmer 2014: 14. See also Clement of Alexandria *Protr.* 2.22 = *OF*590, 12.92, Plutarch *De prof. virt.* 81e and Lactantius *Div. inst. epit.* 23 cited above.

> ἀτελεστοι, εἶτα πρὸ τοῦ τέλους αὐτοῦ τὰ δεινά πάντα, φρίκη καὶ τρόμος καὶ ἱδρὼς καὶ θάμβος.
>
> (fr. 178 = *OF*594)

> [The soul] has experiences like those initiated into the great mysteries ... first wanderings and going wearily round and endless apprehensive journeys through darkness and before the end everything terrible, shivering and trembling and sweating and amazement.

This is supported by references in Aelius Aristides to Eleusis as the most terrible of things divine (φρικωδέστατον, *Or.* 19 p. 415 Dindorf = 22.2 Behr), in Lucian to someone fearful and threatening with a torch (δᾳδουχοῦσά τις φοβερόν τι καὶ ἀπειλητικὸν προσβλέπουσα, *Kataplous* 22) being reminiscent of Eleusis, and in Proclus to unutterable apparitions in the rites (ἐν ταῖς τελεταῖς τῶν ἀρρήτων φασμάτων, *In Remp.* 2.185.3-4).

It is not, however, clear that Plutarch was referring to Eleusis; we know he was initiated into the Dionysiac mysteries (*Cons. uxor.* 611d). All this evidence is also late. For the classical period, it has been suggested that the fear shown by Metaneira at the epiphany of Demeter in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (χλωρὸν δέος, 190) is an *aition* for the fears in the rite,[140] and that the Empousa encountered by Dionysus in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes reflects a similar apparition seen by the initiates.[141] Plato refers to φάσματα in connection with initiation (*Phdr.* 250c), but these are good apparitions (εὐδαίμονα). The case is plausible but not proven.[142]

[140] Richardson 1974 *ad* 188-90.

[141] Brown 1991: 49-50.

[142] Bremmer 2014: 13-14. The suggestion that hallucinogenic mushrooms were involved is implausible; Bowden 2010: 43, Cosmopoulos 2015: 19-21.

Most scholars seem to agree that a central part of the secret ceremonies was a sacred drama re-enacting the myth of Demeter and Kore.[143] The key evidence for this is the statement of Clement of Alexandria (second-third century AD):

> Δηὼ δὲ καὶ Κόρη δρᾶμα ἤδε ἐγενέσθην μυστικόν, καὶ τὴν πλάνην καὶ τὴν ἁρπαγὴν καὶ τὸ πένθος αὐταὶν Ἐλευσὶς δᾳδουχεῖ.
>
> (*Protr.* 2.12)

> Deo and Kore have now become a drama of the mysteries, and Eleusis celebrates with torches their wandering and abduction and grief.

I believe, however, that this is very unlikely. I have not space in the present study to set out my reasons in full, but in summary they are as follows. It is not clear that Clement actually means to say this: the drama in the first half of the sentence may not be the same as the celebration in the second half,[144] or 'become' (ἐγενέσθην) may imply that what he is saying is a recent development, or δρᾶμα might just be a metaphor.[145] Clement, as I shall make clear later,[146] in any case shows little knowledge of the various mysteries, which he tends to confuse, and apparently got his information from a second-hand compilation. There are practical difficulties: the Telesterion (*Fig.* 1) had 42 internal columns a few metres apart, and does not seem suitable for the presentation of a performance to an audience of thousands,[147] especially if

[143] E.g. Foucart 1914: 457-74, Mylonas 1961: 261-72, Richardson 1974: 24-6, Clinton 1992: 84-90, Bowden 2010: 40-2, Bremmer 2014: 10.

[144] It has been generally assumed that the two halves linked by καί form a hendiadys, but they may just be two separate illustrations of Clement's point.

[145] So Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1932: 473-4.

[146] Chapter Seven section 5.

[147] Dowden 1980: 425-7.

they are blindfolded, as I suggested above. The other evidence that has been put forward to support Clement's statement[148] does not in fact do so.

We also rely on Clement for the *synthema*, the so-called password of the Eleusinian mysteries:

> κἄστι τὸ σύνθημα Ἐλευσινίων μυστηρίων· ἐνήστευσα, ἔπιον τὸν κυκεῶνα, ἔλαβον ἐκ κίστης, ἐργασάμενος ἀπεθέμεν εἰς κάλαθον καὶ ἐκ καλάθου εἰς κίστην.
>
> (*Protr.* 2.18)

> This is the password of the Eleusinian mysteries: I fasted, I drank the *kukeon*,[149] I took from the *kiste*,[150] I performed and placed in the *kalathos* and from the *kalathos* in the *kiste*.

Is this a genuine part of the ritual, perhaps a reply of the initiand to a priest testifying that he or she has performed the first stages and can proceed to the next?[151] I think the main difficulty is the existence of a number of similar statements relating to other cults: Clement again on the Phrygian rites of Attis and Cybele,[152] Arnobius referring to mysteries in general,[153] Firmicus Maternus

[148] Chiefly Apollodorus *FGrHist* 244 F110, Tertullian *Ad. nat.* 2.7, Lactantius *Div. inst. epit.* 23 and Proclus *In Remp.* 1.125-21-2.

[149] The drink of barley grains and pennyroyal taken by Demeter in the *Homeric hymn* (208-10).

[150] *Kiste* and *kalathos* are types of basket.

[151] Accepted by e.g. Roussel 1930: 72-3, Richardson 1974: 22-3, Burkert 1987: 94. Bremmer 2014: 3 suggests that the ritual acts must have been performed prior to the Greater Mysteries, when there would not have been time for them, but I am not clear why in a week-long festival this would not have been the case.

[152] ἐκ τυμπάνου ἔφαγον· ἐκ κύμβάλου ἔπιον· ἐκερνοφόρησα· ὑπὸ τὸν παστὸν ὑπέδυν, *Protr.* 2.14.

[153] *jejunavi atque ebibi cyceonem; ex cista sumpsi et in calathum remisi; accepi rursus, in cistulam transtuli*, *Adv. gent.* 5.26 = Migne *P.L.* v.1137.

on 'a certain temple'[154] and a scholiast to Plato on Eleusis again,[155] to which we can probably add the words επιον ... συνθημα ... τον καλαθον from the apparently Dionysiac Gurôb Papyrus (*P. Gurôb* 1.25-8 = *OF*578).[156] Either they are all copying from each other, both in the statement and in the ritual, or there is considerable confusion in the sources over the cult to which they should be assigned. This is an interesting question to which I shall return in my conclusion.

I shall finally mention a number of other things attributed to Eleusis by Christian writers.[157] The higher grade of initiates, the *epoptai*, are shown as the great mystery a reaped ear of corn (τεθερισμένον στάχυν).[158] The initiands shout 'Rain! Conceive!' (ὗε κύε).[159] There is a sacred marriage involving the hierophant and priestess descending alone to an underground chamber (καταβάσιον).[160] The hierophant declares 'The lady Brimo bore a holy boy Brimos' (ἱερὸν ἔτεκε πότνια κοῦρον Βριμὼ Βριμόν).[161] Some of these claims

[154] ἐκ τυμπάνου βέβρωκα, ἐκ κυμβάλου πέπωκα, γέγονα μυστικός, *Err. prof. rel.* 19 = Migne *P.L.* xii.1022.

[155] ἐκ τυμπάνου ἔφαγον, ἐκ κυμβάλου ἔπιον, ἐκερνοφόρησα, ὑπὸ τὸν παστὸν ὑπέδυν καὶ τὰ ἑξῆς, schol. Pl. *Grg.* 497c.

[156] This text is discussed below, Chapter Three section 10.

[157] Bremmer 2014: 12-14.

[158] Hippol. *Haer.* 5.8.39 = Migne *P.G.* xvi.3150, quoting a Gnostic of the Naassene sect.

[159] Hippol. *Haer.* 5.7.34 = Migne *P.G.* xvi.3137, similarly Proclus *In Ti.* 293c and an Athenian inscription *IG* II^2 4876.

[160] Asterios *Hom.* 10.113B = Migne *P.G.* xl.324. There was, however, no such underground chamber at Eleusis; Mylonas 1961: 314.

[161] Hippol. *Haer.* 5.8.40-1 = Migne *P.G.* xvi.3150, also from the Naassene. Brimo was a name for Persephone (Burkert 1983: 289, Bremmer 2013: 40-1), though in Apollonius Rhodius (3.1211) it refers to Hecate; the name also appears on gold leaf D3. It may be relevant that there was an Alexandrian festival celebrating the birth of Aion to Kore (Fraser 1972: ii.336). Possibly the boy was Ploutos (Wealth), the son of Demeter in Hesiod (*Th.* 969); Clinton 1992: 92-3.

are quite plausible, but in the absence of either confirmatory or contradictory evidence their value is difficult to assess.

The other public mysteries can be dealt with fairly briefly.[162] The best known were the mysteries of the Great Gods at Samothrace.[163] Like Eleusis, this had μύσται and ἐπόπται,[164] perhaps borrowing the terminology from what appears to have been the older institution.[165] The earliest dated evidence is from the fifth century, but most of our information on the Samothracian mysteries is Hellenistic, following their increase in importance under the patronage of Philip II of Macedon.[166] The purpose of the ceremony was, however, different from Eleusis: to keep the initiate safe from the perils of the sea.[167] The identity of the Great Gods (μεγάλοι θεοί), as they eventually became known, was a secret, and seems to have confused contemporaries as much as ourselves.[168]

The mysteries of the Kabeiroi[169] were celebrated in various places, including Imbros, Lemnos, Pergamon, Miletus and Thebes. Those of the Korybantes[170] seem to have originated in Rhodes and Kos, though they spread more widely in the fifth century, eventually reaching Athens. Little is known about either; possibly the Kabeiroi were associated with coming-of-age rituals and the

[162] General surveys: Burkert 1987, Bowden 2010, Bremmer 2014.

[163] Cole 1984, Bremmer 2014: 22-36, Constantinakopoulou 2015: 281-4.

[164] Cole 1984: 27.

[165] Graf in Graf and Johnston 2013: 238n20, Bremmer 2014: 21.

[166] Cole 1984: 11, 16-20, Bremmer 2014: 22.

[167] Bremmer 2014: 28-9, Constantinakopoulou 2015: 281-4.

[168] Cole 1984: 1-4.

[169] Bowden 2010: 55-66, Bremmer 2014: 37-48.

[170] Voutiras 1996, Bremmer 2014: 48-53.

Korybantes with healing.[171] The two were sometimes identified with each other, or with the Kouretes or with the Great Gods of Samothrace. In Hellenistic times a great many local mysteries developed in Greece;[172] Pausanias mentions eleven in Arcadia alone.[173] Of most we know little more than the name. Those of Andania in Messenia are the best-known.[174]

There is no mention in any of the references to these competitors to Eleusis of the prospect of a better fate after death, though as our information on most of them is so slight we cannot say that this was not offered. It seems indeed to be this that was the principal legacy of Eleusis to the private initiations which I shall be examining. I have suggested above that there possibly may be some common ground in areas such as the fear felt by the participants or the *synthema* or password, but otherwise we shall not find any evidence for copying the details of the Eleusinian ritual. This is perhaps in itself puzzling, as it might seem an obvious thing to do, but I do not have an explanation.[175]

The Eleusinian mysteries possessed great prestige. The orator Isocrates, speaking of the gifts given to Athens by Demeter, places them equal in value to the invention of agriculture:

> καὶ δούσης δωρεὰς διττὰς αἴπερ μέγισται τυγχάνουσιν οὖσαι, τούς τε καρπούς, οἳ τοῦ μὴ θηριωδῶς ζῆν ἡμᾶς αἴτιοι γεγόνασι, καὶ τὴν τελετήν, ἧς οἱ μετασχόντες περί τε τῆς τοῦ βίου τελευτῆς καὶ τοῦ σύμπαντος αἰῶνος ἡδίους τὰς ἐλπίδας ἔχουσιν.
>
> (Isoc. *Paneg.* 28)

[171] Bremmer 2014: 54.

[172] Bowden 2010: 72-82, Bremmer 2014: 81-99.

[173] Bremmer 2014: 81.

[174] Bowden 2010: 68-71, Bremmer 2014: 86-96, Kearns 2015: 34-6.

[175] Alexander of Abonoteichus (Lucian *Alex.*) did imitate Eleusis, but this was much later.

> and giving the two greatest gifts, the fruits of the earth, which are the cause we do not live the life of the beasts, and the rite of which those participating have pleasanter hopes for the end of life and all eternity.

There were occasional sceptical voices,[176] but the general opinion had no doubt that the rituals were efficacious in ensuring a better fate in the next world. Certainly, the tens of thousands of initiates who had expended their time and money in undergoing the process must have thought so. They therefore performed a key function for the private initiators in validating their own analogous rites.

[176] E.g. Diogenes (D.L. 6.2.39); see also Chapter Five section 4 below.

6: Orphism

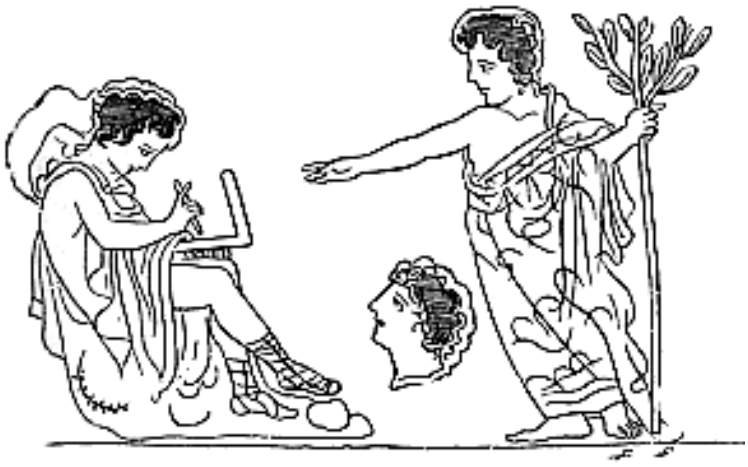

Fig. 3. Head of Orpheus dictating

Attic red figure vase, dated to 410 BCE. The head of Orpheus speaks, a young man writes down the text, while Apollo holds a protective hand above. Beazley catalog # 250142, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 103.25. Dictionnaire de Ch. Daremberg et E. Saglio (1877).

It will not be part of my argument in this study that any of the topics under consideration are connected with anything that may be called Orphism, or indeed that anything called Orphism existed at this period, except in a few narrowly defined senses. Nevertheless, a great deal of modern scholarship in this area does refer to what it considers to be an Orphic sect and Orphic doctrines, and therefore it seems necessary to set out the evidence for what was believed of Orpheus in the classical period, what later-attested ideas have been supposed also to have been current at this time, and why I believe that we do not have good grounds for taking these into account.

It might be useful to begin with a brief, and very selective, sketch of the fluctuations of modern scholarly opinion.[177] One of the first serious studies, Lobeck's *Aglaophamus* of 1829, took a generally critical and sceptical view; the key myth of the death of Dionysus (Zagreus), which I shall discuss below, he characterised as a late and pathological *obscaena fabula*.[178] Towards the end of the century, however, the discovery of a number of funerary gold leaves[179] led Comparetti to interpret them as 'abstract[s] from a poem containing the mystic beliefs of the ancient Orphics',[180] and this view of the existence of an Orphic religion was broadly followed in influential works such as Rohde's *Psyche* (first edition 1890-4), Harrison's *Prolegomena to the study of Greek religion* (first edition 1903) and Guthrie's *Orpheus and Greek religion* (first edition 1935).[181]

Wilamowitz was, however, sceptical,[182] and in 1941 Linforth in *The arts of Orpheus* produced a detailed critical review of all sources in which the name of Orpheus was actually mentioned in order to demonstrate that the idea of the existence of an Orphic religion was in fact erroneous. Dodds in *The Greeks and the irrational* (1951) was perhaps expressing the consensus of the period when he called Orphism 'a house of dreams' and 'a projection upon the screen of antiquity of certain unsatisfied religious longings'.[183]

[177] Torjussen 2010: 7-46, Edmonds 2013b: 11-70.

[178] Lobeck 1829: 615-99, Gagné 2008: 112-13.

[179] Discussed below, Chapter Four.

[180] Comparetti in Smith and Comparetti 1882: 113.

[181] Rohde 1925, Harrison 1922, Guthrie 1952.

[182] Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1932: 190-205.

[183] Dodds 1951: 148.

The situation changed again in the later twentieth century, following the discovery of the Derveni Papyrus, the Olbia bone tablets and yet more funerary leaves. The name most closely associated with the revived concept of Orphism is that of Bernabé, the editor of a new edition of the fragments ascribed to, referring to or thought to refer to Orpheus and the Orphics,[184] who together with his pupils has produced a stream of articles over the last twenty-five years, shedding a great deal of light on these topics, but all posited on the basic assumption of the existence in classical times of a group of Orphics following a distinct way of life and believing in a form of the Orphic mythology not clearly attested until the later Neoplatonists. Many other scholars have also subscribed to a greater or lesser extent to this view.[185]

Taking the opposite tack, Edmonds, in a major critical re-assessment,[186] has returned to the scepticism of Linforth, pointing out the extent to which Comparetti's conception of Orphism was informed by contemporary debates on Christianity. In a later book[187] he has amplified his argument, putting forward what he describes as an extended polythetic definition of Orphism to include characteristics of strangeness, antiquity, sanctity and purity.[188] This definition, however, has the disadvantage that it may create a mismatch between the etic use of the term, that is to say by modern scholars, and the emic use as it was actually employed in the period by contemporaries, and so I shall not be following this approach.

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[184] Bernabé 2004-7, replacing that of Kern 1922.

[185] See e.g. West 1983: 170-1, Parker 1995: 496, Most 1997: 131-2, Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 127, Bremmer 2014: 56-70.

[186] Edmonds 1999, which I have generally followed in the account below. Similarly: Torjussen 2010: 89-129.

[187] Edmonds 2013b.

[188] Edmonds 2013b: 71-92.

In examining the evidence for Orpheus in the classical period, I shall begin with Orpheus the person. The Orpheus of myth is first attested in the sixth century BC.[189] He was a Thracian (Eur. *Hyps.* 1 iii.10 = *OF*972, 1007, 64.98 = *OF*1009) lyre-player who went on the expedition of the Argonauts (Pind. *Pyth.* 4.176-7 = *OF*899, 1006). He could charm the beasts and the trees with his music (Ὀρφεὺς κιθαρίζων σύναγεν δένδρεα μούσαις, σύναγεν θῆρας ἀγρώτας, Eur. *Bacch.* 562-4 = *OF*947) and went to Hades in an attempt to fetch his wife (Pl. *Symp.* 179d = *OF*983). He was finally torn to pieces by women (Pl. *Resp.* 620a = *OF*1077), for what reason is not clear, and his severed head and lyre floated to Lesbos, where they were buried.[190]

He was also known as a poet. In the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, the best traditional poets (τῶν ποιητῶν οἱ γενναῖοι, 1031 = *OF*547) are listed as Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod and Homer (1032-6). We read in Plato of books of Musaeus and Orpheus (*Resp.* 364e = *OF*573),[191] and there are a number of other references in the period to Orpheus as a poet.[192] There was some scepticism: Aristotle speaks of the 'so-called poems of Orpheus' (τοῖς καλουμένοις Ὀρφέυς ἔπεσιν, *Gen. An.* 734a = *OF*404), and Herodotus (2.53 = *OF*880) appears to think them later than Homer and Hesiod. A number of ancient writers thought that at least some of them were actually written by Pythagoreans;[193] these included works called *Descent to Hades*, *Sacred*

[189] Linforth 1941: 1-38.

[190] Although literary testimony for the story of the head is much later (Linforth 1941: 128-9), it has been identified in art from the fifth century (Guthrie 1952: 33-9) (cf. *Fig. 3*).

[191] Discussed above, Chapter One section 4.

[192] Linforth 1941: 104-7.

[193] Linforth 1941: 109-19, Dodds 1951: 149, West 1983: 7-15, Bernabé 2013b: 124.

doctrine, *Robe* and *Nature* (Εἰς Ἅιδου κατάβασις, Ἱερὸν λόγος, Πέπλος, Φυσικά, Epigenes *apud* Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1.131 = *OF*1018).

As to their content, Isocrates says he especially treated (ὁ μάλιστα τούτων τῶν λόγων ἀψάμενος) outrageous stories of the gods, such as thefts, adultery and castration (*Bus.* 38-9 = *OF*26). Plato quotes this couplet:

> Ὠκεανὸς πρῶτος καλλίρροος ἦρξε γάμοιο,
> ὅς ῥα κασιγνήτην ὁμομήτορα Τηθὺν ὄπυιεν
>
> (Pl. *Cra.* 402b-c = *OF*22)
>
> Fair-flowing Ocean was the first to marry, who married Tethys, his sister from the same mother

The poem ascribed to Orpheus which is commented on in the *Derveni Papyrus*[194] covers the coming to power of Zeus in Olympus.[195] These all suggest mythological works on the lines of the *Theogony* of Hesiod. This is confirmed by his appearance in the third-century *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius, where he sings just such a song to the Argonauts (1.496-511 = *OF*67).

Orpheus is also credited with the foundation of sacred rites, τελεταί.[196] As explained in the previous chapter,[197] the term covers many kinds of rites, and is by no means confined to initiation. A fourth-century orator speaks of 'Orpheus who introduced the holiest rites to us (ὁ τὰς ἁγιωτάτας ἡμῖν τελετὰς καταδείξας Ὀρφεὺς, [Dem.] 25.11 = *OF*33, 512), and there are similar statements in Aristophanes (Ὀρφεὺς μὲν γὰρ τελετὰς θ' ἡμῖν κατέδειξε, *Ran.*

[194] Below, Chapter Seven section 5.

[195] I am not concerned here with much later works such as the *Hymns* or the Orphic *Argonautica* (Linforth 1941: 165-260, Edmonds 2013b: 160-91); the subject matter of the *Rhapsodic theogony* will be considered below.

[196] The evidence is collected in Bernabé 2008: 14-25.

[197] Chapter One section 5.

1032 = *OF*510, 547, 626) and a tragic poet of the fourth century (μυστήριων ... ἔδειξεν Ὀρφεύς, [Eur.] *Rhes.* 943-4 = *OF*511).[198] These may refer to Eleusis,[199] but certainly by the time of Hecataeus of Abdera at the end of the century he could be given responsibility for the rites of Dionysus, Isis and Osiris also (τῶν μυστικῶν τελετῶν τὰ πλεῖστα, *FGrHist* 264 F25). I discuss below a passage in Herodotus (2.81 = *OF*650) which seems to refer to some kind of rites (here ὀργία) as Orphic.

There is evidence for an Orphic way of life, whose principal characteristic was vegetarianism:[200]

> Ὀρφικοί τινες λεγόμενοι βίοι ἐγίγνοντο ἡμῶν τοῖς τότε, ἀψύχων μὲν ἐχόμενοι πάντων, ἐμψύχων δὲ τοὐναντίον πάντων ἀπεχόμενοι.
>
> (Pl. *Leg.* 782c-d = *OF*625)
>
> We lived then so-called Orphic lives, keeping entirely to the soulless and conversely abstaining from everything ensouled.

Theseus in Euripides charges Hippolytus with being a follower of Orpheus (Ὀρφέα τ᾽ ἄνακτ᾽ ἔχων, Eur. *Hipp.* 953 = *OF*627), which he seems to believe entails chastity, vegetarianism, Bacchic rites and vaporous writings; he may, however, be confusing different cults and practices,[201] and certainly the enthusiastic hunter Hippolytus seems an unlikely vegetarian. In Aristophanes, Orpheus is praised for leading men away from bloodshed (φόνων τ᾽ ἀπέχεσθαι, *Ran.* 1032 = *OF*510, 547, 626), though this might mean a more peaceful civilisation rather than vegetarianism.[202] A fourth-century comedy

[198] Liapis 2012 *ad loc*.

[199] Graf 1974: 22-39.

[200] Edmonds 2013b: 217-25.

[201] Cole 1980: 228.

[202] Dover 1993 *ad loc*.

on the theme of Orpheus refers to stuffing with leaves (βύστραν τιν' ἓκ φύλλων τινῶν, Antiph. *Orph.* fr. 178 KA = *OF*631, 1149), perhaps meaning a vegetarian diet. Herodotus (2.81 = *OF*650) connects Orpheus with an avoidance of woollen clothing, which may be a kind of vegan extension of the same doctrine. Orpheus, like Pythagoras, became in later times closely associated with vegetarianism, though there is considerable confusion in the evidence for both.[203]

We now need to examine the case for the presence in the classical period of a distinctive Orphic myth, one which has been frequently put forward by Bernabé and others as underlying many aspects of contemporary private initiation. The myth in question is best known from the *Rhapsodic theogony* attributed to Orpheus, of which we have extensive quotations in the later Neoplatonists, especially Proclus and Damascius.[204] This theogony seems to date from the first or second centuries AD and to be based on earlier Orphic poems now lost.[205] There are references to the myth from Hellenistic times:[206] Callimachus (fr. 643 = *OF*36),[207] Euphorion (frr. 13, 53 De Cuenca = *OF*36, 59) Philodemus (*Piet.* 44 = *OF*59),[208] Diodorus (3.62.6 = *OF*59, 5.75.4 = *OF*283),

[203] Edmonds 2013b: 119-223; Betegh 2014: 154-9.

[204] For reconstructions see West 1983: 70-5, 227-58; Bernabé 2003: 107-214. The earlier theogonies of Eudemus and of Hieronymus and Hellanicus (Bernabé 2003: 49-61, 97-106) do not seem to have included this myth.

[205] West 1983: 246-7; Bernabé 2003: 109.

[206] Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013:73-80, Edmonds 2013b: 345-60.

[207] Callimachus (fr. 43, 117 Pf. = *OF*34) also refers to υἷα Διώνυσον Ζαγρέα γειναμένη, connected by the Byzantine etymologists (*Et. Gen., Etym. Magn., Et. Sym. s.v.* Ζαγρεύς) with this story.

[208] Henrichs 2011.

Plutarch (*De esu carn.* 996b = *OF*318), Pausanias (8.37.5 = *OF*39, 1113)[209] and Clement of Alexandria (*Protr.* 2.17.2 = *OF*306, 588).

The myth is as follows.[210] Zeus was succeeded as ruler in Olympus by Dionysus, sometimes referred to in this context as Zagreus, and here supposed to be his son by Persephone. The Titans, incited by Hera, decoyed him with toys and killed him. There are various versions of what happened to his different members, but, according to one, the Titans boiled, roast and ate him.[211] Zeus, however, destroyed the Titans with his thunderbolt and restored Dionysus to life.

A key contribution to the modern interpretation of the myth was made by the sixth-century AD Alexandrian Neoplatonist Olympiodorus.[212] Mankind, he said (*In Phd.* 1.3-6 = *OF*320), was created from the remains (τῆς αἰθάλης τῶν ἀτμῶν, 'sublimate of the vapour') of the Titans after their destruction by the thunderbolt. Human beings have therefore inherited something of the divinity of Dionysus, as he was inside them. It is not in fact clear how far this interpretation was really an Orphic doctrine and how far an original idea of

[209] Ascribing it to Onomacritus, but see Linforth 1941: 350-3 for scepticism.

[210] Summarised in Guthrie 1952: 82-3; fuller versions in Graf and Johnston 2013: 66-93, and with extracts from the Rhapsodies (in Spanish translation) in Bernabé 2003: 182-202; critical discussion in Linforth 1941: 307-64.

[211] For the significance of the cooking process, see Detienne 1979: 68-94.

[212] Fullest treatment in Brisson 1992, but see the reassessment in Edmonds 1999, expanded in Edmonds 2009a and Edmonds 2013b: 374-91, also Bernabé 2002: 404-6.

Olympiodorus,[213] who seems to have been influenced by contemporary alchemical ideas.[214]

The notion of the Titanic origin of man is attested in several sources.[215] Hesiod (*Th.* 507-11) makes the Titan Iapetos the father of Prometheus and Epimetheus. In the *Homeric hymn to Apollo* they are the ancestors of men and gods (Τιτῆνές ... τῶν ἔξ ἄνδρες τε θεοί τε, 335-6). There are a number of other references, generally much later. Oppian in the second century AD (*H.* 5.9-10 = *OF*320) suggests that man, if not created by Prometheus, may be born from the blood of the Titans. The Orphic *Argonautica* (17-20 = *OF*320), on the other hand, believes their[216] sperm dropped from the sky to create mankind. The Orphic *Hymn to the Titans* (*OF*320) has them ancestors of all living animals, including man. In these examples, however, the descent is not peculiar to man, as gods or other animals may be included, it is not from their ashes or remains and it is not linked with the crime of the Titans and their blasting by the thunderbolt.

There is, however, no trace in Olympiodorus of any claim that humanity inherited the guilt of the Titans. There are suggestions in Plutarch (*De esu carn.* 1.996b = *OF*318) and in Olympiodorus' older contemporary Damascius (*In Plat. Phd.* 1.8.= *OF*320) that what is evil and irrational in our nature comes from the

[213] Linforth 1941: 331-2, Edmonds 1999: 40-2, Bernabé 2002: 404-8.

[214] Brisson 1992: 492-4. *Contra* Bernabé 2002: 405-6, who translates αἰθάλη in its original sense as 'soot', but as Brisson makes clear, it was already used as an alchemical term by Zosimus.

[215] Bernabé 2002: 426-33 collects the references. See also Linforth 1941: 331-4, Edmonds 2013b: 296-303.

[216] Γηγενεῖς, 'earthborn', an epithet of the Giants, who were, however, commonly confused with the Titans by this period.

Titans, linking this with their killing of Dionysus,[217] but original sin is not a conception directly attested in antiquity.[218] Plato had indeed already spoken of 'the so-called ancient Titanic nature' (τὴν λεγομένην παλαιὸν Τιτανικὴν φύσιν, *Leg.* 701c = *OF*37) as something evil, but this was taken in antiquity as referring to a different episode, the rebellion of the Titans against Zeus.[219] Dio Chrysostom several centuries later also suggests that human beings are hated by the gods because of our descent from the Titans and their opposition to them in the Titanomachy.[220]

It is not until the nineteenth century that we find this idea made explicit. The Italian scholar Domenico Comparetti, responding to the discovery of some of the earliest gold leaves[221] to be found, suggested that mankind inherited not only something of the divinity of Dionysus, but also something of the guilt of the Titans who killed him.[222] The idea that mankind inherited the guilt of the

[217] These and other less convincing examples are put forward by Bernabé 2002; for a sceptical treatment, see Edmonds 2013b: 296-391.

[218] Linforth 1941: 350, Edmonds 2009a: 514-16.

[219] Cic. *Leg.* 2.3.5; Edmonds 2013b: 329.

[220] 'All we humans are of the blood of the Titans. As they were the enemies of and fought against the gods, we too are not friends of the gods' (τοῦ τῶν Τιτάνων αἵματός ἐσμεν ἡμεῖς ἅπαντες οἱ ἄνθρωποι. ὡς οὖν ἐκείνων ἐχθρῶν ὄντων τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ πολεμησάντων οὐδὲ ἡμεῖς φίλοι ἐσμέν, *Or.* 30.10 = *OF*320, 429); Edmonds 2013b: 269-70.

[221] Chapter Four.

[222] 'The human soul is of divine origin, but the gods from whom she most directly proceeds are the Titans. These having torn to pieces the sacred body of Zagreus, Zeus punished them with his thunderbolt and reduced them to ashes, from which human souls emerged. But, as the Titans had been eating from the flesh of Zagreus, a spark of good, pure divinity is in us mixed with Titanic evil and impurity. This Titanic element is the original guilt for which the human soul is excluded from the community of the other gods and from her blessed abode, and is condemned to a succession of births and deaths' (Comparetti in Smith and Comparetti 1882: 116).

Titans has been seen by modern commentators as the cardinal myth of Orphism, and the ancient equivalent of the Christian doctrine of original sin.[223]

It should be emphasised that there was no general view in antiquity that the Titans were evil and guilty. In fact, the Titans can even be praised, as in the Orphic *Hymn to the Titans* (*OF*320). Even in the mystery cults, for example, we find that in Imbros the Titans seem to have been involved in the cult of the Kabeiroi (*IG* XII 8.74), and in Lycosura a statue group represented the Titan Anytus alongside Demeter, the mother of Persephone (Paus. 8.37.4-5).[224]

It is often assumed that the theogony quoted in the Derveni Papyrus,[225] though it contains little trace of the story in the *Rhapsodic theogony*, was nevertheless a different account of the same myth, simply because both claim the authorship of Orpheus; the apparent differences are accounted for by the fragmentary state of the Derveni text.[226] This cannot, however, be proved. There is no mention of Orpheus in the surviving papyrus apart from his authorship of the theogony, which was very much the kind of poem that we have seen he might be credited with, and though there are some kind of initiates involved there is no mention of vegetarianism or the Orphic way of life. The account as we have it centres very much on Zeus, with no mention of the Titans or Dionysus.[227]

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[223] Alderink 1981: 13-15; Edmonds 1999.

[224] Bremmer 2014: 37, 84.

[225] Chapter Seven section 5.

[226] 'The events of the Derveni Theogony', says Rusten, '... can be assumed to be largely identical with those in the later poem ascribed to Orpheus (called the *Rhapsodies*).' (Rusten 1985: 122); for similar views see West 1983: 86-7, Brisson 2003: 19, KPT: 24, Kotwick 2017: 27.

[227] For a more sceptical treatment, see Piano 1916: 242-6.

The case is similar with the funerary gold leaves to be discussed in a later chapter.[228] They are often referred to as Orphic.[229] They do not, in fact, anywhere actually mention Orpheus, while Dionysus or Bacchics only appear briefly in four of over forty examples. I shall examine later the concept of ποινή, which has been linked to this myth, and explain why I believe they are not in fact related.[230]

It will therefore be seen that we have no unequivocal evidence for the myth before the Hellenistic period,[231] and it is doubtful if we have any at all for the idea that mankind inherited the guilt of the Titans. That does not preclude the existence of these concepts in earlier times, given the scanty evidence for anything in this area, and the possibility that they might constitute some sort of secret doctrine (ἐν ἀπορρήτοις, Pl. *Phd.* 62b = *OF*429, 669). In the absence, however, of any real evidence for this, it must be accounted simply speculation, and its adoption as apparently proven fact by many modern scholars to owe more to preconceived ideas than to adherence to the contemporary sources.

Were there any people in the classical period who would call themselves 'Orphic' (Ὀρφικοί)? Burkert identifies three different meanings of the term.[232] First, it can signify the authors of works passing under the name of Orpheus. The first recorded use of the term in this sense is not until the first century AD,

[228] Chapter Four below.

[229] 'Orphic gold tablets' Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, '"Orphic" gold tablets' Edmonds 2011b.

[230] Chapter Five section 7 below.

[231] Sandin 2008: 8 suggests that the *sparagmos* of Dionysus is a late syncretistic borrowing from Egyptian religion, presumably referring to the myth of Osiris, though *sparagmos* was already associated with Dionysus in the story of Pentheus.

[232] Burkert 1982: 3-4; Alderink 1981: 17-18 lists twelve possibilities.

when a passage included in pseudo-Apollodorus recounts that Asclepius raised Hymenaeus from the dead 'as the Orphics say' (ὡς οἱ Ὀρφικοὶ λέγουσι, 3.10.3 = *OF*365).[233] However, the periphrasis of Plato, 'Orpheus and those around him' (οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα, *Prt.* 316d, *Cra.* 400c = *OF*430, 667),[234] who write religious and prophetic works, might be considered equivalent.

Secondly, it can be used of those who perform Orphic mysteries, apparently first in a fragment ascribed to Achilles Tatius in about the second century AD (οἱ τὰ Ὀρφικὰ μυστήρια τελοῦντες, *Comm. Arat.* 17.11 Di Maria = *OF*114).[235] I have already examined the term Ὀρφεοτελστής, 'celebrator of Orphic rites', which has been seen as having the same meaning.[236]

Burkert's third meaning is that of members of a community founded on the authority of Orpheus. Plato, as noted above, uses 'Orphic' as an adjective describing the Orphic way of life (Ὀρφικοί τινες λέγομενοι βίοι, *Leg.* 782c = *OF*625). The two chief pieces of evidence for its use as a substantive in the period are, however, both from the fifth century.

Herodotus, in his description of Egyptian customs, says that they cannot enter the temples or be buried in woollen clothing, adding:

> ὁμολογέουσι δὲ ταῦτα τοῖσι Ὀρφικοῖσι καλεομένοισι καὶ Βακχικοῖσι, ἐοῦσι δὲ Αἰγυπτίοισι καὶ Πυθαγορείοισι: οὐδὲ γὰρ τούτων τῶν ὀργίων μετέχοντα ὅσιον ἐστὶ ἐν εἰρινέοισι εἵμασι θαφθῆναι.
>
> (Hdt. 2.81 = *OF*650)

[233] It appears to be an interpolation: Hard 1997: 173-4. For later references see Linforth 1941: 276-89.

[234] Orpheus himself is included in οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα; see Chapter Five section 6 below.

[235] Linforth 1941: 225, 277, Burkert 1982: 4.

[236] Chapter One section 5 above.

> They agree in this with so-called Orphic[s] and Bacchic[s] [rites], which are actually Egyptian[s] and Pythagorean[s]: for it is not holy for anyone participating in these rites to be buried in woollen garments.

ὁμολογέουσι δὲ ταῦτα τοῖσι Ὀρφικοῖσι καλεομένοισι καὶ Βακχικοῖσι can either be translated 'they agree in this with the so-called Orphics and Bacchics', thus referring to some people called Orphics, or it may mean 'they agree in this with the so-called Orphic and Bacchic rites'. Herodotus does go on in the same sentence to refer to 'these rites' (τοῦτων τῶν ὀργίων), which suggests that it is rites to which he is referring, not people.[237] In either case, Orphics and Bacchics may refer to two different communities, or rites, or may be meant as synonyms, in which case the 'so-called' (καλεομένοισι) may mean that 'Orphic' is a loose term for what are really Bacchic. All we can be certain of is that there were at least some rites that could be called Orphic, but, as indicated above, this could apply to any rites supposed to have been founded by Orpheus.

Also fifth century are three bone plaques found at Olbia (*OF*463-5), a Greek colony on the north coast of the Black Sea (*Fig. 5*).[238] Graffiti crudely scratched on them include the name Dionysus several times, the words 'life death life' (βίος θάνατος βίος) and the letters ΟΡΦΙΚ or ΟΡΦΙΚΟ, possibly what remains of Ὀρφικοί.[239] This may be an adjective applying to some masculine noun, for example λόγοι,[240] or perhaps an epiclesis of Dionysus ('Orphic Dionysus').[241] It

[237] There is a long discussion in Linforth 1941: 38-50, including a consideration of the differences between the Florentine and Roman manuscripts, into which I do not propose to enter.

[238] West 1982, Vinogradov 1991, Zhmud 1992. Sketch, text and translation in Graf and Johnston 2013: 214-2. I consider them as possible evidence for Dionysiac initiation in Chapter Three section 3 below.

[239] The last letter is unclear (West 1982: 21-2) and Edmonds also doubts the O (Edmonds 2013b: 199).

[240] Edmonds 2013b: 199-200.

[241] Graf 2011: 55.

may alternatively refer to a group of people called Orphics. We know from Herodotus (4.79 = *OF*563) that there was an active cult in the area of Dionysus, who is mentioned on the plaques; perhaps this was a local name for the followers of that cult. Even if so, however, we cannot safely extrapolate from a group of Orphics at Olbia, on the fringes of the Greek world, to posit groups of Orphics elsewhere with similar beliefs and practices.

The evidence for the existence in the classical period of a group or sect who identified themselves as Orphics is therefore slight and doubtful. Indeed, as I pointed out in the Introduction, the whole modern concept of a sect is largely a product of Christianity and alien to Greek polytheism. There is warrant for Orphic as an adjective describing poems thought to be written by Orpheus or rites established by him or a vegetarian diet that he introduced, but not, at least in this period, for people who called themselves Orphics or for a doctrine or religious movement that we might describe as Orphism

Chapter Three

Dionysus, initiation and the afterlife

1: The question to be answered

Fig. 4. Dionysus with satyr and maenads

Black figure pottery (ampfora?). Dionysos, satyr with lyre and maenads, around 520 BC. Archaeological Museum of Syracuse. By Zde - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=53944131

Private initiation has often been connected by modern scholars with the cult of Dionysus, typically linked with Orphism in some such formulation as Orphic-Bacchic.[1] However, although we know that Eleusis held out the prospect of a better fate in the next world, the question of how far this applied to the worship of Dionysus remains a more open one. 'It would, however, be an inadmissible generalization to claim that all bacchic *teletai* were concerned exclusively or even primarily with the afterlife' is the cautious conclusion of Burkert.[2] In this chapter, I should like to establish firstly if there did exist

[1] See e.g. Burkert 1977, Graf and Johnston 2013, Bremmer 2014: 55-80.

[2] Burkert 1985: 295.

Dionysiac initiation concerned with the afterlife, and secondly, if so, when and where it came into being, as far as this is possible to determine.

It should not be assumed *a priori* that the nature of the cult was constant over time and space, that what applied at one time or in one place was necessarily valid everywhere or for all antiquity. In fact, it may be possible to distinguish at least four different types of Dionysiac cult:

(i) the civic festivals of the wine god,

(ii) the mountain *orgia* of the women,

(iii) the initiation rites of the private practitioners,

(iv) the religious associations of Hellenistic and later times.

I shall not be concerned at all with the fourth type,[3] which is out of my period, but will deal briefly here with the first two, as it will be necessary to distinguish them from the initiation rites that are our subject.

The civic festivals of Dionysus included at Athens the rural Dionysia, the Anthesteria, a three-day Spring festival, and the Great Dionysia, open to all Greeks since at least the Pisistratan period in the sixth century.[4] There were Anthesteria also in other Ionian areas (Thuc. 2.15.4). All were well established in the classical period and were usually wine-based in some way.[5] None seem

[3] Nilsson 1957a, Cazanove 1986, Burkert 1993., Slavova 2002, Jaccottet 2005, Bremmer 2014: 100-09.

[4] Parker 2005: 291-326.

[5] Burkert 1985: 163; Pickard-Cambridge 1968: 1-125. For the marriage of the *basilinna* to the god at the sanctuary of Dionysus in the Marshes during the Anthesteria (Dem. 59.72-6), see Kapparis 1999 *ad loc.*

to have any reference to the fate of the celebrants after death. It is generally thought that on the third day of the Anthesteria at Athens the κῆρες, or spirits of the dead, were abroad, but this has been disputed,[6] and in any case would be hard to connect with an initiation cult.

There are also the trieteric *orgia*[7] on Mount Parnassus, dancing by groups of women on the mountains in the winter of alternate years.[8] 'The Thuiades', says Pausanias, 'are Attic women who frequent Parnassus with the Delphic women in alternate years and hold *orgia* for Dionysus' (αἱ δὲ Θυιάδες γυναῖκες μέν εἰσιν Ἀττικαί, φοιτῶσαι δὲ ἐς τὸν Παρνασσὸν παρὰ ἔτος αὐταί τε καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες Δελφῶν ἄγουσιν ὄργια Διονύσῳ, 10.4.3).[9] Attic vases from the sixth century on show mythical *thiasoi*, processions of female maenads and male satyrs following Dionysus, which may reflect contemporary ritual practice (*Fig. 4*).[10] The festivals of the Lenaia at Athens and the Agrionia elsewhere seem also to have had a maenadic element.[11] Again, there is no trace of any connection with the fate of the celebrants after death.[12]

[6] Rohde 1925: 168; *contra*, Robertson 1993. They may have been Carian slaves (Κᾶρες) rather than κῆρες; Parker 2005: 287. See also Johnston 1999: 63-71 on offerings to the dead at the Anthesteria.

[7] The word is used of rites in general, including sometimes those of Eleusis, but especially for ecstatic rites; cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1342a ἐξοργιάζουσι τὴν ψυχὴν.

[8] Nilsson 1957a: 4-8; Dodds 1960: xi-xx, Henrichs 1978.

[9] See also Diod. 4.3.3.

[10] Burkert 1985: 166, Isler-Kerényi 2009: 64. On maenads, see Parker 2005: 323-6.

[11] Lenaia: Pickard-Cambridge 1968: 25-42, Parker 2005: 317. Agrionia: Henrichs 1978: 137, Parker 2005: 28n85. Plutarch (*Quaest. conv.* 717a) describes the Agrionia as a ritual search by women for Dionysus, followed by a meal and asking each other riddles, but it may have become more sedate by his day.

[12] Cf. Festugière 1935: 119-21.

3/1: The question to be answered

I now want to examine those cases in which there may be, or has sometimes been seen, a possible indication of a Dionysiac initiation cult offering a better fate in the afterlife. In each case, I shall be looking for definite evidence that we have here an initiation cult offerering a better fate after death, rather than some other type of Dionysiac worship; of course, it will not normally be possible to rule out that there was an associated initiation cult for which the evidence has not survived. I shall review the evidence in an approximately chronological order.

2: Early evidence

Dionysus is sometimes connected with the Eleusinian mysteries. This probably arose because Iacchos, a personification of the cry ἴακχε, was the god presiding over the procession to Eleusis, and was then confused with Iacchos as an epiclesis of Dionysus.[13] There is no indication that they were originally linked.

Heraclitus, at around the close of the sixth century, says that 'Hades and Dionysus, for whom they go mad and celebrate Bacchic rites, are the same' (ὠυτὸς δὲ Ἀίδης καὶ Διόνυσος, ὅτεωι μαίνονται καὶ ληναΐζουσιν, DK22B15); this does not suggest initiation. I have discussed above[14] his possible reference to 'night-walkers, magi, bacchoi, maenads and initiates', (νυκτιπόλοις, μάγοις, βάκχοις, λήναις, μύσταις, DK22B14), concluding that these are probably not the actual words of Heraclitus, but have been introduced by Clement of Alexandria many centuries later.

A fifth century inscription from a grave precinct at Cumae (*IGASMG* III 15 *SEG* 4.92) forbids non-bacchoi to be buried there (οὐ θέμις ἐντοῦθα κεῖσθαι (ε)ὶ μὲ τὸν βεβαχχευμένον).[15] Contemporary vases from South Italy often show bacchic scenes.[16] I do not see that the middle-passive perfect βεβαχχευμένον ('having become bacchic') necessarily indicates initiation into the mysteries[17]

[13] Clinton 1992: 64-71; see also Mylonas 1961: 252-5, 275-8, 308-9, Graf 1974: 51-66, Bremmer 2014: 6. On the identification of Dionysus with Ploutos see Richardson 1974: 319.

[14] Chapter Two section 6.

[15] Turcan 1986 argues on slender grounds that this indicates an 'Orphic' group; *contra* Pailler 1995: 109-26, Casadio 2009 (with further bibliography at 43n14).

[16] Burkert 1977: 3-4, Isler-Kerényi 2009.

[17] So Turcan 1986: 237. He is right that the perfect implies that being bacchic is a permanent state that they have attained, but there is no reason why, despite his assertion

rather than, for example just having taken part in *thiasoi* and *orgia*, where the participants were described as βακχεῖα (Diod. 4.3.3); *thiasiotai* might be required to attend their fellows' funerals.[18] I do not know of any other case where a good fate in the afterlife requires not just initiation, but also burial in a certain place.[19]

The same reservation applies to the alleged Bacchic prohibition on burial in wool reported by Herodotus (2.81 = *OF*43, 650).[20] None of these have any clear link to initiation or to the soul's fate in the afterlife.

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that '[l]e bacchant des thiases n'est *bacchos* que pour un temps', they might not be so described after having taken part in *thiasoi* and *orgia*. Euripides uses the passive to mean 'driven mad' (βεβάκχευται μανίαις, *Or.* 835), clearly not the meaning here, but showing that the meaning could be much wider than initiation.

[18] Sokolowski 1962: 210-12. Cf. οὗτον ἔθαψαν τὺ Διωνιουσιαστή (*IG* VII 686, Tanagra, after 200 BC).

[19] In a sixth century tomb inscription from Cumae (*IG* XIV 871, *IGDGG* 18), the word ληνός has been interpreted as Bacchic initiate (Jiménez San Cristóbal 2007); there are, as she acknowledges, other interpretations of the word ('sarcophagus', personal name), but even if 'bacchic' is correct, there is no warrant for initiation. Turcan 1986: 240-2 suggests as motives for separate burial ensuring that the initiates are not buried in wool, and avoiding the company of the ghosts of the uninitiate haunting their graves (as suggested by Plato *Phd.* 81c-d); neither seem very convincing.

[20] The interpretation of this passage has been much disputed; see Chapter Two section 6. The conclusions of Linforth 1941: 38-50 are probably still valid.

3: The bone tablets from Olbia

Fig. 5. Olbia bone tablet [A]

West 1982: 18

There is, however, a hint of something different at Olbia, a colony of Miletus founded at the beginning of the sixth century in Scythian territory on the northern shore of the Pontus. The cult of Dionysus is attested at Miletus in the third century,[21] and it was doubtless from there it came to Olbia. It was certainly established by the fifth century, as we find from Herodotus (4.78-80 = *OF*563). We are told that the Scythian king Skules, a lover of Greek customs, participated in Bacchic rites in the town (ἐτελέσθη τῷ Βακχείῳ), following which he joined a *thiasos* or procession in which he took part in Bacchic revelry and was temporarily driven mad by the god (καὶ βακχεύει τε καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μαίνεται).[22]

So far, there is nothing much different from the wild dancing on Mount Parnassus, or the processions on the Attic vases. There have recently,

[21] Henrichs 1969.

[22] As Clinton 2003: 54-5 points out, there is no sign that he was involved in any initiation into the mysteries.

however, come to light three crudely scratched bone tablets from the tenemos area at Olbia (*OF*463-5), dating from the fifth century BC.[23] They bear the following texts:

A: βίος θάνατος βίος / ἀλήθεια / Δίο Ὀρφικ

B: εἰρήνη πόλεμος / ἀλήθεα ψεῦδος / Διόν

C: Διο / ἀλήθεια / σῶμα ψυχή

life death life / truth / Dio(nysus) Orphic(s)

peace war / truth lie / Dion(ysus)

Dio(nysus) / truth / body soul

Attention has focused on the first tablet, which has been held to prove the existence of a group identifying themselves as Orphics (*Orphikoi*) and believing in an afterlife ('life death life' being taken as a temporal sequence).[24] Here I just want to consider the significance of the words 'life death life'.

If taken as a temporal sequence, these words can be interpreted in at least three ways:[25] (i) as a reference to metempsychosis, where life and death alternate, (ii) as indicating a new life after death, in the manner of the gold leaves D1-2, to which I shall return in the next chapter, 'Now you have died and now you have been born ... on this very day', (iii) as mortal life being an interval, equivalent to death, in eternal life, as Euripides suggests (τίς δ' οἶδεν,

[23] West 1982, Vinogradov 1991, Zhmud 1992.

[24] West 1982: 18-19; Burkert 1993: 259; Graf 1993: 242; discussed in Chapter Two section 6 above.

[25] West 1982: 18-19.

εἰ τὸ ζῆν μέν ἐστι κατθανεῖν, / τὸ κατθανεῖν δὲ ζῆν;, fr. 638, Pl. *Grg.* 492e).[26] The second option seems the most popular among scholars.[27]

I do not, however, think that these words can be considered in isolation from the other pairings on these tablets, 'peace war', 'truth lie' and 'body soul'. Like 'life death' these constitute opposites. They cannot, however, plausibly refer to a temporal sequence, in which lies always follow truth or soul always follows body. Nor is it easy to see how any of them can encapsulate a fundamental religious doctrine of the same kind as a new life awaiting the initiate after death.[28] We would therefore have to take one of the four pairs of opposites as having a very different kind of meaning from the other three, and our only justification for doing this is the repetition of the word 'life' in the pair.

The tablets are very crudely scrawled, almost like doodles, and the first βίος starts halfway up the side, at right angles to θάνατος βίος, which may lead us to doubt if they are meant to be read as one unit (*Fig. 5*). We may well be dealing with what are simply random jottings. However great the temptation to read back what we know from a later period into these enigmatic texts, we do not have here unequivocal evidence for initiation rites.

[26] Chapter Five section 6.

[27] Graf 2011: 56. Porres Caballero (2011: 131) suggests that the reference is in fact to Dionysus himself, dismembered by the Titans and then reborn. This of course depends on the myth of dismemberment being known at this early date.

[28] For an attempt at interpreting them in this way, see Bernabé 2007a: 177-8. It involves rearranging the words on the tablets (his 'Dion(iso) | mentira verdad | cuerpo alma' is a conflation of tablets B and C), ignoring one pair altogether (peace war), and forcing the others into a meaning they do not obviously bear (that the body is a lie, that is, a false life).

4: The *Cretans* of Euripides

The following fragment of Euripides' *Cretans*, dating perhaps from the 430s BC, has sometimes been put forward as an example of Dionysiac initiation:[29]

> ἁγνὸν δὲ βίον τείνομεν ἐξ οὗ
> Διὸς Ἰδαίου μύστης γενόμην,
> καὶ νυκτιπόλου Ζαγρέως βούτης[30]
> τὰς ὠμοφάγους δαίτας τελέσας
> μητρί τ' ὀρείῳ δᾷδας ἀνασχὼν
> μετὰ[31] κουρήτων
> βάκχος ἐκλήθην
> ὁσιωθείς.
> πάλλευκα δ' ἔχων εἵματα φεύγω
> γένεσίν τε βροτῶν καὶ νεκροθήκης
> οὐ χριμπτόμενος τήν τ' ἐμψύχων
> βρῶσιν ἐδεστῶν πεφύλαγμαι.
>
> (Eur. fr. 472 Kannicht 9-19 = *OF*567)

> I have led a pure life from the time I became an initiate of Idaean Zeus and a herdsman of night-wandering Zagreus, performing his feasts of raw flesh, and raising torches high to the mountain Mother among the Kouretes, I was purified and called bacchos. Clad in white clothes, I avoid the birth of mortals and do not approach the places of their dead, and I have guarded myself against food of ensouled creatures.

Bremmer[32] takes this as both Dionysiac and Orphic, the introduction of Idaean Zeus and so on being merely a concession to the Cretan setting of the play, with three grades of initiation (μύστης, βούτης, βάκχος),[33] and Orphic

[29] Bernabé 2004-7 *ad loc* summarises the varying views.

[30] Emended Diels, Nauck for βροντὰς.

[31] Emended Blaydes, Wilamowitz for καὶ.

[32] Bremmer 2013: 42-3.

[33] The argument relies on a combination of possible but unproven suppositions: (i) that the apparently meaningless βροντὰς in l.11 should really be βούτης, (ii) that this is really the

vegetarianism and concern for purity. There seem, however, to be too many contradictions in the passage to make it easy to take it as a consistent account. The speaker (the chorus) is simultaneously a follower of Zeus, Dionysus Zagreus, Cybele and the Kouretes. He is a strict vegetarian who also eats raw flesh.[34] The reference to initiate (μύστης) seems just another ingredient in this composite picture. Certainly, there is no mention of the afterlife, and the Dionysiac element does not go beyond the traditional dancing on mountains.

same as Βουκόλος, both meaning 'herdsman', (iii) that βουκόλος, attested much later (eg *OF*585, 2nd century AD) as a Bacchic title, was so at this period (Eur. fr. 203, which has a real herdsman, and a Cratinus title whose signficance is unknown are not much evidence for this), (iv) that the narthex-bearers and bacchoi in Plato (*Phd.* 69c = *OF*576, section 7 below) are two grades of initiates, rather than non-initiate followers of Dionysus and initiates, (v) that the initiates and bacchoi in gold leaf B10 (section 6 below) are different rather than synonyms, (vi) that the initiators subsequently dropped these distinctions through laziness.

[34] Festugière 1935: 372-4.

5: Euripides' *Bacchae* as *hieros logos*?

The most extended treatment of the cult of Dionysus in literature (at any rate until Nonnus, nearly a thousand years later) is in the *Bacchae* of Euripides, produced after Euripides' death in 406 BC. This is the subject of Seaford's article 'Dionysiac drama and the Dionysiac mysteries',[35] where he seeks to demonstrate that Euripides is constantly alluding to Dionysiac mysteries in the play, which he thinks in part derives from an authoritative religious text or ἱερὸς λόγος.[36] I do not believe this conclusion to be correct. I shall first set out my own view of the play, before considering Seaford's article in detail.

The ritual described in the play is primarily orgiastic dancing by women on the mountains. In the fullest description, in the messenger's speech (677-74), there are also supernatural phenomena, such as fountains of milk and wine, and violence, notably the tearing to pieces of cattle. This corresponds, with a certain amount of poetical licence, to the trieteric *orgia* in the contemporary cult of Dionysus, which I described in the opening section.

There is no indication that this is an initiation cult offering benefits in the afterlife. When Teiresias, an adherent of Dionysus in the play, is telling Pentheus of the good things brought by the god (266-327), he lists only the invention of wine, the power of prophecy and the ability to panic enemies in battle. There are a number of references to *teletai* (22, 73, 238, 260, 465), but, as I have shown,[37] this can denote many kinds of rite, including *orgia*; what

[35] Seaford 1981.

[36] Seaford 1981: 252.

[37] Chapter One section 5.

Pentheus calls τελετὰς in 465, Dionysus calls ὄργια in 470, the words being clearly used as synonyms.

Only in two places might a possible allusion be seen to a better fate after death. The chorus at 72 calls the god's followers μάκαρ, 'blessed', a typical way of describing such initiates, but nothing in their song subsequently has any reference to the afterlife.[38] Later, Pentheus asks what benefits sacrificing to Dionysus might bring (ἔχει δ' ὄνησιν τοῖσι θύουσιν τίνα;, 473), but Dionysus claims he is not allowed to say (οὐ θέμις ἀκοῦσαί σ', ἔστι δ' ἄξι' εἰδέναι, 474). There is no sign that anything after death is meant. In any case, the purpose as distinct from the nature of initiation would not be secret to non-initiates; though the rites at Eleusis were secret, it was well-known that, in the words of Isocrates, they offered 'pleasant hopes for the end of life and all eternity' (περὶ τε τοῦ βίου τελευτῆς καὶ τοῦ σύμπαντος αἰῶνος ἡδίους τὰς ἐλπίδας ἔχουσιν, *Paneg.* 28).

This is a different conclusion to that reached by Seaford in the article mentioned above, where he seeks to demonstrate that Euripides is constantly alluding to Dionysiac mysteries in the play. His arguments for this may be summarised as follows, with my comments:

(i) *There is likely to be continuity between the classical and later periods, when the mysteries are better attested, as there was continuity at Eleusis, and mysteries are anyway conservative.*[39] This is conjecture. As I have already made clear, the cult of Dionysus was by no means confined to mystery rites.

[38] For Seaford's view see (iii) below.

[39] Seaford 1981: 252-3.

(ii) *There is an essential similarity between the Dionysiac mysteries and the Eleusinian.*[40] This may be true, but does not seem relevant to Seaford's thesis here.

(iii) *At 72-3, μάκαρ followed by τελετὰς must indicate initiation, especially when followed in the same line by εἰδὼς ('knowing').*[41] I have dealt with μάκαρ and τελετὰς above, and I cannot see that a reference to knowing, though it may be used of initiation, is sufficiently characteristic of it.

(iv) *ἀμαθής, 'ignorant', in 480 probably means 'uninitiated' here.*[42] This is not a usual meaning.[43]

(v) *Mysteries feature, for the initiate, 'shivering and trembling and sweating and amazement' (φρίκη καὶ τρόμος καὶ ἱδρὼς καὶ θάμβος, Plut. fr. 178 =* OF*594), which parallels the experience of Pentheus.*[44] As Seaford himself recognises, the difficulty here is that this would cast Pentheus in the role of the initiate, whereas, so far from receiving inestimable benefits, he is torn to pieces.

(vi) *Pentheus dresses as a woman, and transvestism is a well-known feature of initiatory ritual.*[45] He cites an inscription of the second century AD referring to male and female *bacchoi* and *bacchai* wearing a girdle. His reference to Van

[40] Seaford 1981: 253.

[41] Seaford 1981: 253-4.

[42] Seaford 1981: 254.

[43] Not in *LSJ s.v.* Seaford cites a Byzantine compilation (*Suda s.v.*) for this meaning. The only classical source he cites (Ar. *Nub.* 135) is not relevant, as the meaning there is clearly 'ignorant'.

[44] Seaford 1981: 255-8.

[45] Seaford 1981: 258-9.

Gennep suggests that he may be here confusing initiation as as a rite of passage, where there may be a role for Dionysiac transvestism,[46] with initiation into the mysteries.[47]

(vii) *The language at 902-5 has a liturgical ring.*[48] Even if this is the case, the subject is merely being called 'happy' (εὐδαίμων); it is not specified in what respect.

(viii) *The strange sights seen by Pentheus, such as two suns (918), mark the new identity of the initiate.*[49] I have already drawn attention to the difficulty of seeing Pentheus as an initiate.[50] In a later article he suggests that Pentheus is confused by looking into a mirror, one of the toys used by the Titans to decoy Dionysus, though he accepts that there is no actual mirror on the stage.[51] There is no evidence for this, and I am not sure about the logic of Dionysus using the mirror that was used upon him.

(ix) *There are references to the initiate dying to be reborn, which was a feature of Dionysiac initiation.*[52] The supposed references are two. At 821, the female dress Pentheus is to assume is of linen (βυσσίνους), which is the material of

[46] Bremmer 1999b.

[47] See Introduction above for the distinction.

[48] Seaford 1981: 260; Dodds 1960 *ad loc.*

[49] Seaford 1981: 259-60.

[50] Seaford calls into support a comparison by Clement of Alexandria between Pentheus and initiation into the mysteries of Christianity (*Protr.* 12.118.5). Clement wrote over five hundred years after Euripides from a very different perspective, and contrary to the later claim of Eusebius (*Praep. Evang.* 2.2.64), it is very unlikely that Clement had any personal experience of the mysteries, but was instead relying on some now lost compilation; Herrero de Jáuregui 2007: 20-3, 2010: 147-9.

[51] Seaford 1987.

[52] Seaford 1981: 260-2.

shrouds. It also, however, appears to have been characteristic of female dress,[53] and Pentheus' response, 'I shall be classed with women instead of as a man?' (ἐς γυναῖκας ἐξ ἀνδρὸς τελῶ;, 822), shows him to have understood it in this sense. There is again the difficulty of identifying Pentheus with the initiate. At 860-1 Seaford gives Διόνυσον, ὅς πέφυκεν ἐν τέλει θεός, δεινότατος, ἀνθρώποισι δ' ἠπιώτατος[54] the sense of 'Dionysus, who is most terrible in the initiation of the god, but to humans most gentle', taking *telos* as *teletai,* 'rites', a meaning it does not normally bear,[55] the terror being caused by the rebirth. I cannot, however, see that this quite fits with the contrast with 'gentle to humans'. [56] His conjecture that rebirth was a feature of Dionysiac initiation, on the other hand, though some of the evidence he provides for it is either late or dubious, has received some confirmation in the Pelinna gold leaves, discovered since his article was published, as I shall discuss below.

I have to conclude, therefore, that Seaford's arguments all fall into the category of ingenious special pleading, and that there is no sign either that an initiation cult is being described here or that there is any reference to the afterlife. As I noted above, in cults like Eleusis that did offer benefits in the next world, there was no secret about the aim as distinct from the means: in the words of the *Homeric hymn to Demeter*, 'Happy is he of men on earth who sees these things; he who is uninitiated and has no part of these rites has not

[53] Dodds 1960 *ad loc.*

[54] Punctuation of Dodds 1960; Seaford omits the comma after θεὸς.

[55] Not in *LSJ s.v.*, but there are parallels: see Richardson 1974: 314.

[56] The meaning is perhaps 'who is a god in power' (*LSJ s.v* τέλος 2); see Dodds 1960 *ad loc* for other possibilities.

the same fate when he perishes under the murky gloom'.[57] We must therefore reject the *Bacchae* as any kind of *hieros logos*.

[57] ὄλβιος, ὃς τάδ' ὄπωπεν ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων: /ὃς δ' ἀτελὴς ἱερῶν ὅς τ' ἄμμορος, οὔποθ' ὁμοίων /αἶσαν ἔχει φθίμενός περ ὑπὸ ζόφῳ ἠερόεντι, 480-2.

6: Dionysus in the gold leaves

We next turn to the gold leaves found in graves in various parts of the Greek world, which have been dated from the fourth century BC onwards.[58] As I shall demonstrate in the next chapter, the gold leaves have many incompatibilities between themselves, so that evidence for one cannot be taken to apply to all the others. There are just four that mention Dionysus or bacchics.

The gold leaf from Hipponion, a Greek colony in Calabria, dating from about 400 BC, is probably the earliest gold leaf we possess (B10). In the main, this is quite a normal text of the B type, with directions to the newly departed soul about the way it should take among the cypresses and springs of the infernal landscape. It is clearly, therefore, concerned with the afterlife. It ends, however, in a unique way:

> καὶ δὴ καὶ σὺ πιὼν ὁδὸν ἔρχεα<ι> ἅν τε καὶ ἄλλοι
> μύσται καὶ βάχχοι ἱερὰν στείχουσι κλε<ε>ινοί.
>
> and you too, having drunk, will go along the sacred road that the other famed initiates and bacchics travel.

Here we have for the first time an unequivocal testimony that the bacchics are initiates who go to a special place after death.[59] It shows that Dionysiac initiation was established in South Italy by the end of the fifth century.

[58] See Chapter Four for further details.

[59] Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2008: 52-3) suggest that the initiates and bacchics in this text are two different groups, and that the bacchics here are Orphic bacchics, differing from Dionysiac bacchics in that they pursue a lasting condition, not a temporary ecstasy, and differing from those described here as initiates, who they say are also Orphics, in being initiates who have in addition followed the ascetic and ritual prescriptions of the Orphic

The other cases are later, and from Thessaly. D4, from around 300 BC, simply identifies the dead person as a priestess of Dionysus (εὐαγὴς ἱερὰ Διονύσου Βακχίου). The remaining two (D1-2), from Pelinna, are slightly later.[60] They are in the shape of ivy leaves,[61] itself suggesting Dionysus, and begin identically:

> νῦν ἔθανες καὶ νῦν ἐγένου, τρισόλβιε, ἄματι τῶιδε.
> εἰπεῖν Φερσεφόναι σ' ὅτι Βάκχιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε.
>
> Now you have died and now you have been born, thrice fortunate one, on this very day. Say to Persephone that Bacchios himself released you.

After some lines in both on falling into milk as a bull or ram and having wine as an honour, one of them (D1) concludes:

> καὶ σὺ μὲν εἶς ὑπὸ γῆν τελέσας ἅπερ ὄλβιοι ἄλλοι[62]
>
> and you will go under earth having celebrated rites just as the other fortunate ones

The dead person, then, has celebrated rites, here plausibly referring to initiation, and comes after death before Persephone free and fortunate, a process in which Dionysus has been instrumental. There is no doubt that this is Dionysiac initiation offering a better fate in the afterlife. There are two especially striking features.

The first is the terminology of 'releasing' (ἔλυσε). *Lusios* was a well-known epiclesis of Dionysus (e.g. Paus. 2.2.5, 2.7.6, Orph. *H.* 50), which has been

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life. They provide no evidence for this, and it seems confused. At any rate, the rewards after death appear to be the same for both. See also Jiménez San Cristóbal 2009.

[60] For a general survey, see Segal 1990.

[61] Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 61, with a drawing in Merkelbach 1999: 11.

[62] There are, however, variant readings; see Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 90-1.

explained as the liberating effect of drunkenness or bacchic frenzy.[63] There is an explanation of this, accepted by Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal, [64] in Damascius, who says that Dionysus is called Luseus, 'for he is the one who releases the bond of those he wishes, as he is also responsible for the individual life' (οὗτος γάρ ἐστιν ὁ λύων τὸν δεσμὸν ὧν ἂν ἐθέλῃ, ἅτε καὶ αἴτιος ὢν τῆς μερικῆς ζωῆς). He then proceeds to quote some lines ascribed to Orpheus:

> ἄνθρωποι δὲ τεληέσσας ἑκατόμβας
> πέμψουσιν πάσῃσιν ἐν ὥραις ἀμφιέτῃσιν
> ὄργιά τ' ἐκτελέσουσι λύσιν προγόνων ἀθεμίστων
> μαιόμενοι· σὺ δὲ τοῖσιν ἔχων κράτος, οὕς κε θέλῃσθα
> λύσεις ἔκ τε πόνων χαλεπῶν καὶ ἀπείρονος οἴστρου
>
> (Dam. *In Plat. Phd.* 1.11 (on 62b3-4) = *OF*350)

> Men will send perfect hecatombs in all seasons year by year, and they will perform *orgia*, striving after release from unlawful ancestors. But you having power over them, you will release whomever you wish from difficult suffering and limitless frenzy.

Damascius, however, was writing from a Neoplatonist viewpoint some 800 years after the gold leaf was buried, and was heavily influenced by the later Orphic *Rhapsodic theogony*,[65] from which his quotation is likely to come, so I do not think his explanation can necessarily be relied on to apply eight centuries earlier. At any rate, Plutarch, midway between the two, though an initiate of Dionysus, knows nothing of this, but explains *Lusios* merely as 'releasing the soul through employing truth and freedom of speech towards others' (ἀπολύων τῆς ψυχῆς ἀληθείᾳ καὶ παρρησίᾳ χρῆσθαι πρὸς ἀλλήλους, *Quaest. conv.* 716b-c). It may be that ἔλυσε in the gold leaf is simply a play on

[63] Dodds 1951: 76, Santamaría 2013: 50-1.

[64] Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 75-6.

[65] Brisson 1991.

words, alluding to Dionysus' well-established but otherwise unconnected epithet.

The second striking feature is the reference to rebirth after death: 'now you have died and now you have been born, thrice fortunate one, on this very day'.[66] The closest parallel in the gold leaves is A4, 'hail, having suffered the experience which you have never previously suffered' (χαῖρε παθὼν τὸ πάθημα τὸ δ' οὔπω πρόσθ' ἐπεπόνθεις); this of course would be true just of death, at least if we rule out metempsychosis, but there is perhaps an implication of something more. We might also compare those texts in which the deceased is said to have become a god from a mortal (A4 again, A1, A5).[67]

Seaford, writing before the publication of the Pelinna gold leaves, but perhaps presciently identifying rebirth after death as a feature of Dionysiac initiation, has further suggested that this was reflected in a mock death in the ritual itself.[68] His evidence for this is, however, not entirely conclusive, consisting of:

(a) A4, cited above, where the *pathema* seems clearly to allude to actual death rather than to part of the ritual;

(b) a reference in Theocritus (26.27-9), where a child apparently being initiated into Dionysiac mysteries might suffer a worse fate than Pentheus (χαλεπώτερα τῶνδ' ἐμόγησεν), taken by Seaford as an allusion to a mock death, which is a plausible suggestion;

[66] For the phrasing, cf. Sophocles *OT* 438 ἥδ' ἡμέρα φύσει σε καὶ διαφθερεῖ, with other examples in Herrero de Jáuregui 2011.

[67] See also Chapter Four section 4 (g) below.

[68] Seaford 1981: 262.

(c) a reference in Livy (39.8.8) to murders connected with Bacchic rites in 186 BC, assumed to be a distorted account of the ritual;

(d) the flagellation shown in the frescoes in the Villa of the Mysteries (*Fig. 8*) in Pompeii,[69] which may represent Dionysiac ritual of some kind, but only relevant in this connection if the mock death were by whipping.

The evidence for a ritual mock death is therefore uncertain, though the possibility cannot be ruled out.

We therefore have good evidence for Dionysiac initiation meant to affect fate in the afterlife for South Italy around 400 BC and for Thessaly for the early third century. As I said above, in view of the diversity of the gold leaves, this cannot be taken automatically to apply to the other leaves, or to all times and places. If they were indeed all Dionysiac, it is strange that the key role of Dionysus in releasing the soul from the worse fate was only mentioned in two of the forty or so that have been found.

[69] Nilsson 1957a: 66-76.

7: A saying in Plato

Fig. 6. Dionysus holding a thyrsos

Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge. Harvard 1960.347. Beazley Archive No. 217539. Attic Red Figure. Hydria, Kalpis. Attributed to the Class of Brussels A3099. ca 410 - 400 B.C. www.theoi.com.

There are a number of references in Plato to private cults, initiations and religious practitioners, such as the *agurtai* and *manteis* of *Republic* 364b = *OF*573,[70] which may or may not be Dionysiac. The following, however, appears to be the only actual mention of Dionysus or bacchics in this connection:

> καὶ κινδυνεύουσι καὶ οἱ τὰς τελετὰς ἡμῖν οὗτοι καταστήσαντες οὐ φαῦλοί τινες εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τῷ ὄντι πάλαι αἰνίττεσθαι ὅτι ὃς ἂν ἀμύητος καὶ ἀτέλεστος εἰς Ἅιδου ἀφίκηται ἐν βορβόρῳ κείσεται, ὁ δὲ κεκαθαρμένος τε καὶ τετελεσμένος ἐκεῖσε ἀφικόμενος μετὰ θεῶν οἰκήσει. εἰσὶν γὰρ δή, ὡς φασιν οἱ περὶ τὰς τελετάς, ‘ναρθηκοφόροι μὲν πολλοί, βάκχοι δέ τε παῦροι:’ οὗτοι δ᾽ εἰσὶν κατὰ τὴν ἐμὴν δόξαν οὐκ ἄλλοι ἢ οἱ πεφιλοσοφηκότες ὀρθῶς.

[70] Chapter One section 4 above.

(Pl. *Phd.* 69c-d = *OF*434)

> Probably those who established the *teletai* were not thoughtless, but suggested of old that whoever goes to Hades uninitiated and without the rites will lie in mud, but that he who is purified and has undergone the rites will live with the gods. For as they say about the *teletai*, 'the narthex-bearers are many, the bacchoi few'. These are in my opinion no others than those who practice philosophy rightly.

The narthex is the dried stalk of the giant fennel, or *thyrsos*, borne by the participants in Dionysiac *thiasoi* (*Fig. 6*). It may be argued that 'the narthex-bearers are many, the bacchoi few' is just a traditional saying of the 'many are called, but few are chosen' type that Plato is using with no special relation to what he is describing;[71] the saying was, or became, a well-known proverb that could be used in other contexts (e.g. *Anth. Pal.* 10.106, Diogenian. 7.86 = *OF*576). However, the existence of the proverb must itself imply that there were two grades of followers of Dionysus, and it is difficult to see who the higher grade could be, if not initiates. Coupled with the specific link here with *teletai* and the fate in Hades of initiated and uninitiated, the strong probability must be that this does connect Dionysiac initiation with the afterlife.[72] This would then be the first evidence for Athens.

[71] For similar proverbial sayings, see López Martínez 2011: 283-4.

[72] For a suggestion that the saying is Orphic rather than Dionysiac, see Jiménez San Cristóbal 2009: 47-50.

8: The activities of Aeschines' mother

The most detailed account of a private τελετή known to us (the officiant is described as τελούσῃ and the participants as τοὺς τελουμένους) is in the speech of Demosthenes *On the crown*, dating from 330 BC. In the course of an attack on his opponent Aeschines he scornfully describes the ceremonies at which Aeschines is said to have assisted his mother Glaucothea in his youth. It is generally treated as a reliable description of rites in the cult of Sabazios (or perhaps of Dionysus, or of a Sabazios identical with Dionysus).[73] There are three questions that need to be answered before we can assess the evidence it provides. Which is the god whose cult is being described? What is the date of the evidence? Can we regard it as reliable?

I believe that that the nature and status of this passage have been misunderstood, that it has little connection with either Sabazios or Aeschines' mother, that it refers to a much later date than usually thought and is not a coherent account at all, but that nevertheless it does provide us with reliable evidence.

The passage runs as follows:

> ἀνὴρ δὲ γενόμενος τῇ μητρὶ τελούσῃ τὰς βίβλους ἀνεγίγνωσκες καὶ τἆλλα συνεσκευωροῦ, τὴν μὲν νύκτα νεβρίζων καὶ κρατηρίζων καὶ καθαίρων τοὺς τελουμένους καὶ ἀπομάττων τῷ πηλῷ καὶ τοῖς πιτύροις, καὶ ἀνιστὰς ἀπὸ τοῦ καθαρμοῦ κελεύων λέγειν 'ἔφυγον κακόν, εὗρον ἄμεινον,' ἐπὶ τῷ μηδένα πώποτε τηλικοῦτ᾽ ὀλολύξαι σεμνυνόμενος (καὶ ἔγωγε νομίζω· μὴ γὰρ οἴεσθ᾽ αὐτὸν φθέγγεσθαι μὲν οὕτω μέγα, ὀλολύζειν δ᾽ οὐχ ὑπέρλαμπρον), ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμέραις τοὺς καλοὺς θιάσους ἄγων διὰ τῶν ὁδῶν, τοὺς ἐστεφανωμένους τῷ μαράθῳ καὶ τῇ λεύκῃ, τοὺς ὄφεις τοὺς παρείας θλίβων καὶ ὑπὲρ τῆς κεφαλῆς

[73] Brown 1991: 44n13 summarises the scholarly support for this view.

> αἰωρῶν, καὶ βοῶν 'εὐοῖ σαβοῖ,' καὶ ἐπορχούμενος 'ὑῆς ἄττης ἄττης ὑῆς,' ἔξαρχος καὶ προηγεμὼν καὶ κιττοφόρος καὶ λικνοφόρος καὶ τοιαῦθ' ὑπὸ τῶν γραδίων προσαγορευόμενος, μισθὸν λαμβάνων τούτων ἔνθρυπτα καὶ στρεπτοὺς καὶ νεήλατα, ἐφ' οἷς τίς οὐκ ἂν ὡς ἀληθῶς αὐτὸν εὐδαιμονίσειε καὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ τύχην;
>
> (Dem. 18.259-60 = *OF*577)
>
> When you became a man you read out the books while your mother performed the ceremony and you assisted with the other preparations. During the night you took the fawn skin,[74] mixed the wine and purified the participants and wiped them with mud and bran and after the purification raised them up and told them to say 'I have escaped the bad and found the better', piquing yourself that no-one ever uttered so loud a holy cry (and I believe it; don't think he can talk as loud as he does and not be magnificent at that too). In the day you led the fine procession, garlanded with fennel and white poplar, through the streets, rubbing the *pareias* snakes and raising them above your head, and shouting '*euoi saboi*' and dancing to '*hues attes attes hues*', addressed by the old women as leader and basket-bearer (or ivy-bearer) and *liknon*-bearer, and receiving for this sops and twisted cakes and new-ground barley groats. On these terms who would not truly congratulate themselves and their fortune?

In a further speech he refers to Aeschines reading the books while his mother conducted the rites and, though still a child, rolling in the drunken procession (τὸ μὲν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τὰς βίβλους ἀναγιγνώσκοντά σε τῇ μητρὶ τελούσῃ, καὶ παῖδ' ὄντ' ἐν θιάσοις καὶ μεθύουσιν ἀνθρώποις καλινδούμενον, Dem. 19.199), and to Glaucothea purifying the participants (καὶ ταύτης ἔπι' τελοῦσα μὲν ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ καὶ καθαίρουσα, Dem. 19.249) and leading the procession (καὶ Γλαυκοθέας τῆς τοὺς θιάσους συναγούσης, Dem. 19.281).

This information can be supplemented from Harpocration (*OF*577), the (probably) second century AD compiler of a glossary for the Attic orators, who

[74] It is not clear if he is donning a skin himself or clothing the participants in them; Harpocration (*s.v.* νεβρίζων) gives alternative explanations. The order in which his activities are given might favour the first, as otherwise two operations on the participants, clothing and purifying, would be rather oddly separated by the mixing of the wine (for the libations), but certainty is impossible.

seems to be drawing on an ancient commentary on *On the crown*.[75] He has explanations for the things worn, fawn skins and garlands (νεβρίζων, λεύκη), the things carried, basket, liknon and snakes (κιττοφόρος, λικνοφόρος, παρεῖαι ὄφεις), the things eaten (ἔνθρυπτα, νεήλατα, στρεπτοὺς), the wiping with mud and bran (ἀπομάττων) and the cries (Ἄττης, εὐοῖ Σαβοῖ).

Harpocration's explanations tend to connect the rites that Demosthenes is describing with Dionysus. The white poplar, he says, is a garland of those celebrating Bacchic rites (τὰ βακχικὰ) (*s.v.* λεύκη), the smearing with mud and bran he connects with the myth of Dionysus and the Titans (*s.v.* ἀπομάττων), and κιττοφόρος, which in any case in its normal meaning of 'ivy-bearing' is a standard epithet of Dionysus,[76] is explained as a variant of κιστοφόρος, bearing the sacred *kiste* or basket of Dionysus. Even without this information the ritual seems securely connected with Dionysus by the characterisation of Aeschines as *liknon*-bearer. The *liknon*, or winnowing fan, was part of the cult of Dionysus at least from the third century BC; the statue of the god in the grand procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus was followed by women carrying them (τὰ λίκνα φέρουσαι, Ath. 198e).[77]

There is, however, an alternative offered. The mysterious cries of 'euoi saboi' and 'hues attes hues' that Aeschines is said to have uttered clearly puzzled the readers of Demosthenes, and seem to have puzzled Harpocration and his sources. I shall return to his suggestion for *attes* later. For *saboi* he somewhat tentatively suggests the following:

[75] Burkert 1987: 141n34.

[76] E.g. Pind. *Ol.* 2.27. For the general connection of Dionysus with ivy, see Dodds 1960 *ad* 81.

[77] See Nilsson 1957a: 21-45 for a full survey of the cult use of the *liknon* and its association with Dionysus.

> **Σαβοί:** Δημοσθένης ὑπὲρ Κτησιφῶντος. οἱ μὲν Σαβοὺς λέγεσθαι τοὺς τελουμένους τῷ Σαβαζίῳ, τουτέστι τῷ Διονύσῳ, καθάπερ τοὺς τῷ Βάκχῳ Βάκχους. τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ εἶναι Σαβάζιον καὶ Διόνυσόν φασιν ἄλλοι τε καὶ Νύμφις β' περὶ Ἡρακλείας. οὕτω δέ φασι καὶ τοὺς Ἕλληνάς τινες τοὺς Βάκχους Σαβοὺς καλεῖν. Μνασέας δὲ ὁ Παταρεὺς υἱὸν εἶναί φησι τοῦ Διονύσου Σαβάζιον.
>
> **Saboi:** Demosthenes *For Ctesiphon.* The Saboi are said to be the initiates of Sabazios, that is Dionysus, just as the Bacchoi of Bacchos. That Sabazios and Dionysus are the same say amongst others Nymphis in his second book about Herakleia. So also some say the Greeks call Bacchoi Saboi. Mnaseas of Patara says that Sabazios is the son of Dionysus.

Nymphis of Herakleia Pontica and Mnaseas of Patara in Lycia are Hellenistic authors of the third and second centuries BC. This explanation, though put forward by Harpocration with cautious reservations ('some say') and alternative versions, was widely adopted in antiquity, as we shall see, and has been found convincing, or partly convincing, by modern scholars.[78] It raises a number of questions, which I think have not previously been systematically addressed.[79] Is Sabazios really the same as Dionysus? If not, which of them was involved in Glaucothea's cult? Why also are there apparent references to both, as well as to Attis from yet another cult? I shall try to provide an answer.

Sabazios was a Phrygian deity first mentioned in a Greek context by Aristophanes in the late fifth century (*Vesp.* 8-10, *Av.* 875-6, *Lys.* 388-90). On

[78] E.g. 'she was an expert in Bacchic or Sabazian rites' (Loeb: Vince and Vince 1926 *ad loc*); 'a helper of his mother in the cult of Sabazios' (Nilsson 1957a: 23); 'Sabazios, who is set side by side with Dionysus ... the mother of the orator Aeschines appeared as a priestess in some such circle' (Burkert 1985: 179).

[79] My explanation is developed from Lane 1980: 22-4 on Sabazios and Bremmer 2004: 540-1 on Attis.

the question of his identity with Dionysus, the evidence can be classified into five groups:[80]

(a) *Sabazios is said to be definitely identical with Dionysus. We* have seen that Harpocration reported the historian Nymphis (second century BC) as being of this opinion. There are similar statements in the Byzantine *Etymologicum magnum* (*s.v.)* and *Etymologicum Gudianum* (as Sabandios, ἐπώνυμον Διονύσου) and in the twelfth century Homeric commentaries of Bishop Eustathius (*Il.* 16.627). It seems to be implied in Orphic hymn 49 (date uncertain, possibly second century AD) to Hipta, nurse of Dionysus, of whom it is said she glories in the mystic rites of Sabos (μυστιπόλοις τελεταῖσιν ἀγαλλομένην Σάβου ἀγνοῦ). We might also include Cicero in the first century BC, who says in the *De natura deorum* that the Sabazia were instituted in the honour of one of the five gods called Dionysus he believed to have existed (3.58(23)).

(b) *It is reported that some say that Sabazios and Dionysus are the same.* The identity of those claiming this is not revealed, and our immediate source does not himself explicitly endorse this, as in Harpocration above. There are similar formulations in Diodorus Siculus (Διόνυσον ... ὑπό τινων Σαβάζιον ὀνομαζόμενοι, 4.4.1) in the first century BC, in Plutarch in the second century AD (*Quaest. conv.* 671e-f = *OF*591), in Macrobius in the fifth century (*Sat.* 1.18.11), in Lydus in the sixth century (*Mens.* 4.51) and in the scholia to Aristophanes (*Av.* 874, *Lys.* 388, *Vesp.* 9).

(c) *Sabazios is not identical to Dionysus, but is said to stand in some relation to him.* We have seen that Mnaseas (third century BC) thought him the son of

[80] I follow the general approach indicated by Lane 1980: 22-4. See also Festugière 1935: 196-7.

Dionysus. Strabo (first century BC – first century AD) brings in Cybele, the originally Phrygian Mother of the Gods: 'Sabazios too is of the Phrygians and in a way the child of the Mother, he too passing on the cult of Dionysus' (καὶ ὁ Σαβάζιος δὲ τῶν Φρυγιακῶν ἐστι καὶ τρόπον τινὰ τῆς μητρὸς τὸ παιδίον παραδοὺς τὰ τοῦ Διονύσου καὶ αὐτός, 10.2.15)

(d) *It is implied that Sabazios and Dionysus are different.* We could perhaps include here the Aristophanic references, such as the 'mob of Sabazians' in *Lysistrata* (χοὶ πυκνοὶ Σαβάζιοι, 388), which do not mention Dionysus. The reference of Theophrastus to an initiate of Sabazios (τελούμενος τῷ Σαβαζίῳ, *Char.* 27.8, cf. 16.4) might also suggest a difference. Cicero, too, in another place, refers to 'Sabazios and other foreign gods' in Aristophanes, which must exclude an identification with Dionysus (*Sabazius et quidam alii dei peregrini, Leg.* 2.37).

(e) *Sabazios is identified with Zeus.* The first attestation of this is in a second-century BC inscription from Sardis (*OGIS* 331);[81] the first literary reference (*Sabazi Iovis*) seems to be in the first-century AD Valerius Maximus (1.3.2).[82]

It should be clear from this analysis that there is a rough reverse chronological gradient. The earliest examples give no hint that Sabazius is not an independent god. The later suggestions that he was the same as Dionysus are tentative at first, more confident later. The fact that he could also be identified with Zeus proves that the equation with Dionysus was still not generally accepted some centuries after Demosthenes. We may conclude that the identity of the two was a product of Hellenistic syncretism, and might indeed

[81] Lane 1979: 37-8.

[82] For the textual problems see Lane 1979; for other references see Lane 1980: 32n34.

have been suggested by attempts to explain this passage of Demosthenes. It has no relevance to the activities of the mother of Aeschines.

This then raises the question of why the cry of 'euoi saboi' is appearing in what we have shown to be an otherwise Dionysiac context. Before examining this, I should like to look briefly at the other cry in Glaucothea's procession, 'hues attes attes hues'. This is explained by Harpocration as follows:

> **Ἄττης**: Δημοσθένης ὑπὲρ Κτησιφῶντος. ὁ Ἄττης παρὰ Φρυξὶ μάλιστα τιμᾶται ὡς πρόσπολος τῆς μητρὸς τῶν θεῶν. τὰ δὲ περὶ αὐτὸν δεδήλωκε Νεάνθης· μυστικὸς δὲ ὁ λόγος.
>
> **Attes**: Demosthenes For Ctesiphon. Attes among the Phrygians is especially honoured as the servant of the mother of the gods. Neanthes has explained about him. The story is connected with the mysteries.

Neanthes was the probably early third century BC author of a work on *teletai* (Περὶ τελετῶν), though there is no indication he was referring to the Demosthenes passage. The identification of 'attes' with the Attis prominent in the cult of Cybele, Mother of the Gods, was an obvious one, but there are difficulties. The worship of Cybele originated in Phrygia before it came to Greece, but there is no trace of Attis there.[83] The story of Atys in Herodotus (1.34-43) does not seem connected.[84] The earliest secure evidence for Attis in Greece comes from a mid-fourth century votive stele from the Piraeus (*IG* II^2 4671).[85] Aeschines was born in the early years of the century, and was apparently an adolescent at the time described (παῖδ' ὄντ', 19.199, ἀνὴρ δὲ

[83] Bøgh 2007: 319-22. See also Roller 1994 and 1999.

[84] Bremmer 2004: 536-40.

[85] Roller 1994: 246-9.

γενόμενος, 18.259), so the appearance of Attis in cult here seems suspiciously early. The significance of the 'hues' part of the cry is uncertain.[86]

There are therefore serious inconsistencies in the passage, in the early date for the cult of Attis, and in the apparent presence of elements of that cult and those of Sabazios and Dionysus, whom we have shown to be unconnected at that time, mixed up together. For an explanation, we have to take account of the circumstances in which it was composed.[87] In its context in *On the crown* it is designed to show Aeschines in a ridiculous and rather discreditable role. Demosthenes was some years younger than Aeschines, who, as noted above, was an adolescent at the time referred to, which must therefore be some forty or fifty years earlier. It is not likely that the child Demosthenes followed him through the streets, making notes of the actions of his future opponent. It is not much more likely that he had accurate accounts of exactly what happened in this private cult so long before.

All that Demosthenes was likely to have known, or at least have heard a rumour of, was that Aeschines helped his mother Glaucothea in her cult practices. The colourful details of what went on he simply supplied from what he knew or had heard of cult practices of the time he was making the speech, without much regard to consistency or chronology; he was, after all, a rhetorician not a historian of religion. The account is therefore not a coherent one, but a patchwork or *bricolage* from different sources, perhaps, as the

[86] *Hue* appears somewhere in Aristophanes (fr. 878), according to Pausanias the lexicographer listed among the foreign gods (ξενικοῖς θεοῖς, *s.v.*). Proclus reports that in the Eleusinian mysteries, 'they look up to the sky and shout "rain! [*hue*]" and then down to the ground, "conceive! [*kue*]"' (εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀποβλέψαντες ἐβόων· ὕε, καταβλέψαντες δέ εἰς τὴν γῆν· κύε, *In Ti.* 293c); this, however, is eight hundred years after Demosthenes and it is not clear how it would relate to Attis. Zeus is of course often associated with rain (e.g. Hes. *Op.* 488), and *hue* has also been linked to Dionysus (Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 364d), Semele (Pherec. *FGrHist* 3 F46a) and Osiris (Hellanic. *FGrHist* 608a F7).

[87] I follow and extend the suggestion of Bremmer 2004: 540-1.

review above might suggest, mainly Dionysiac. We can treat what he says as reliable evidence for what he and his audience thought might take place in some of these private rituals in 330 BC, but we cannot ascribe it all to a single cult, whether of Sabazios or of any other god.[88]

After this long preliminary survey of the evidence, it must be admitted that the testimony it may provide concerning the afterlife is both brief and difficult to interpret. As part of the ritual, Aeschines is supposed to have, in a loud voice,[89] told the participants to say 'I have escaped the bad and found the better' (ἔφυγον κακόν, εὗρον ἄμεινον, 18.259). In accordance with the interpretation of the whole passage outlined above, we can take it that this was part of some ritual, probably Dionysiac, in late fourth century Athens. It is less clear what it might mean.

The saying appears again in a collection of Alexandrian proverbs, doubtfully attributed to Plutarch.[90]

> Ἔφυγον κακὸν, εὗρον ἄμεινον: ἐπὶ τῶν μεταβολὴν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς κρείττονα οἰωνιζομένων. Ἀθήνησι γὰρ ἐν τοῖς γάμοις ἔθος ἦν ἀμφιθαλῆ παῖδα ἀκάνθας μετὰ δρυΐνων καρπῶν στέφεσθαι, καὶ λίκνον ἄρτων πλήρη περιφέροντα λέγειν, Ἔφυγον κακὸν, εὗρον ἄμεινον. Ἐσήμαινον δὲ ὡς ἀπεώσαντο μὲν τὴν ἀγρίαν καὶ παλαιὰν δίαιταν, εὑρήκασι δὲ τὴν ἥμερον τροφήν.
>
> (*Proverbia Alexandrina* 16)
>
> I have escaped the bad and found the better: about the change in one's affairs with better omens. For at Athens in marriages it was the custom for a child

[88] Brown 1991: 45n19 reaches a similar conclusion.

[89] Is the 'loud voice' an echo of the 'shout and cry' (βοᾷ καὶ κέκραγε, Hippol. *Haer.* 5.8.40-1) of the hierophant at the climax of the Eleusinian Mysteries, thus adding Eleusis to the *bricolage* of Aeschines' ritual? On this, see Bremmer 2014: 14-16.

[90] Mentioned and dismissed in Nilsson 1957a: 23. The phrase is also in *Carmina popularia (PMG)* fr. 9, without explanation, and in the lexicographers, who are clearly dependent on the *Proverbia Alexandrina.*

> with both parents living to be garlanded with thorns and acorns and carrying around a *liknon* full of loaves to say, I have escaped the bad and found the better. They meant that they had rejected the old diet of wild things and had discovered cultivated food.

There is a possible link with Dionysus in the *liknon*. Despite this, however, it is doubtful if it is relevant. Whatever activities Demosthenes was describing, they certainly did not include a marriage, and the transition to cultivated food would rather be associated with Demeter or Triptolemos, the bringers of grain, of whom there is no other sign in this passage.[91]

It might therefore be better to look to parallels from Eleusis, where a happier fate after death is offered to initiates: 'a different fate after death' (οὔ ποθ' ὁμοίων αἶσαν ἔχει φθίμενός περ, *Hymn. Hom. Cer.* 481-2), 'going to Hades they alone have life there' (μόλως ἐς Ἄιδου τοῖσδε γὰρ μόνοις ἐκεῖ ζῆν ἔστι, Soph. fr. 837 Radt), 'pleasanter hopes for the end of life and all eternity' (περὶ τῆς τοῦ βίου τελευτῆς καὶ τοῦ σύμπαντος αἰῶνος ἡδίους τὰς ἐλπίδας, Isoc. *Paneg.* 28), 'a lighter spirit when dead', (κεῦτ' ἄν ἴκηαι ἐς πλεόνων, ἔξεις θυμὸν ἐλαφρότερον, Crin. *Anth. Pal.* 11.42), 'to die with a better hope' (*spe meliore moriendi*, Cic. *Leg.* 2.36), 'death is not only not evil to mortals, but good' (οὐ μόνον εἶναι τὸν θάνατον θνητοῖς οὐ κακὸν, ἀλλ' ἀγαθόν, memorial to the hierophant Glaukos *IG* II^2 3661). Similarly in the gold leaves: 'I flew out of the painful circle of heavy grief and came with swift feet to the desired crown' (κύκλου δ' ἐξέπταν βαρυπενθέος ἀργαλέοιο, ἱμερτοῦ δ' ἐπέβαν στεφάνου ποσὶ καρπαλίμοισι, A1), or even 'you shall be a god instead of a mortal' (θεὸς δ' ἔσηι ἀντὶ βροτοῖο, A1).

[91] Fabiano 2010 makes an ambitious attempt to combine in a single model the *liknon*, the punishment of carrying water in a sieve in Hades, the mud to which non-initiates are condemned there, the mud used in the purification in Demosthenes' account, the saying, the marriage and the loaves, together with initiation, but I do not think the connections are close enough to make her case convincing.

If 'I have escaped the bad and found the better' is the equivalent of these, and it is indeed part of the ritual of Dionysus as the greater part of the passage seems to be, then we have here evidence for the introduction of hopes for the afterlife into the cult of Dionysus at Athens by 330 BC.[92]

[92] Herrero de Jáuregui 2015: 678-9 suggests that this is not a genuine part of some ritual, but a parody by Demosthenes, but even if this is so, a parody implies the existence of something similar that is being parodied.

9: The Toledo Krater

Fig. 7. The Toledo Krater

Volute Krater (Mixing Vessel) with Dionysus Visiting Hades and Persephone. Attributed to The Darius Painter (Greek). About 330 BCE. Taranto, Italy. Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio. 1994.19. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, Florence Scott Libbey, and the Egypt Exploration Society, by exchange.

It is very unusual to find an artistic depiction of Dionysus in the underworld.[93] An exception is the Toledo Krater (*Fig. 7*), an Apulian funerary krater dating to about 330 BC.[94] Hades and Persephone are shown in their palace. The seated Hades is shaking hands with Dionysus, who stands just outside. They are clearly identified by name labels. Among the other characters shown are

[93] There are, however, fifth-century Locrian reliefs showing Dionysus offering Persephone and Hades wine and a vine; Moret 1993: 300, Torjussen 2006: 94, Torjussen 2010: 188. For Dionysus in Etruscan tomb painting see Mitterlechner 2016: 527-32.

[94] Fuller descriptions in Moret 1993: 295-8, Johnston and McNiven 1996: 25-7, Olmos 2008: 291-3, Torjussen 2010: 187-8.

Hermes and several associated with Dionysus, such as Pentheus and various satyrs and maenads.

This has been interpreted as the artistic equivalent of some of the gold leaves to be considered in the next chapter,[95] where the soul is told to 'say to Persephone that Bacchios himself has freed you' (εἰπεῖν Φερσεφόναι σ' ὅτι Βάκχιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε, D1-2); the handshake would then be Hades' acknowledgement of Dionysus' power in his realm.[96] The resemblance is not very close, however, as Dionysus himself is not actually present on the gold leaves, and they also have Persephone, not Hades, in the leading role.[97] It has alternatively been suggested that the handshake only means that Dionysus is about to depart,[98] or that the vase is just a representation of Dionysiac festivity with no eschatological significance,[99] or that the scene may portray Dionysus' visit to the underworld to lead his mother, in this case Semele, to Olympus.[100]

It is not really possible to say what is meant to be represented here. It does, however, certainly place Dionysus in connection with the afterlife, and therefore could possibly refer to some kind of Dionysiac initiation. If so, the Italian origin may be significant, given that the first real evidence we have for

[95] Chapter Four section 4.

[96] Johnston and McNiven 1996, following Graf 1993: 256.

[97] Torjussen 2006, 2010: 181-95. Johnston and McNiven 1996: 33-4 unconvincingly suggest that Dionysus does not shake hands with Persephone as she is his mother (according to the Orphic myth) and a handshake would be too formal for a mother-son relationship, and so he shakes hands with Hades instead.

[98] Moret 1993: 318.

[99] Slater 2004.

[100] Torjussen 2006, 2010: 181-95.

this, the gold leaf from Hipponion (B10),[101] is also from Italy (about 300 km from Tarentum where the krater was found).

[101] Section 6 above.

10: Dionysus in Egypt

In the Grand Procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus, an account of which is preserved in Athenaeus, the most prominent part seems to have been that devoted to Dionysus.[102] Although its themes were largely structured around his conventional myth, and show no discernible connection with initiation or the afterlife, this does demonstrate the importance of the cult of Dionysus in Egypt under the Ptolemies in the third century BC. Although this is slightly later than the classical period, evidence from this time may well reflect developments in the preceding centuries.

Theocritus was at Alexandria during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (see *Idylls* 15, 17). His *Idyll* 26 is primarily concerned with retelling the death of Pentheus, as in the *Bacchae*, but has a couple of points that may be relevant to us. Agave and her companions open a *kiste*, a chest containing sacred objects (26.7), which we have seen Demosthenes claimed Aeschines carried in the procession, and was certainly later associated with initiation.[103] There is also a reference to someone in their ninth or tenth year (26.29), which it has been suggested was a common age for initiating children.[104] These may be indications that Theocritus was sufficiently familiar with Dionysiac cult in an initiatory context to allude to it even though it was not directly relevant to his story.

[102] Rice 1983: 45-115.

[103] Nilsson 1957a: 57.

[104] Seaford 1981: 262.

It is under Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-204 BC) that we get clearer references to Dionysiac initiation in Egypt. 'Not uninitiated', says Euphronius, 'you celebrants of the mysteries of the New Dionysus' (οὐ βέβηλος, ὦ τελεταὶ τοῦ νέου Διονύσου),[105] the New Dionysus being of course Ptolemy.[106] The king himself, according to Plutarch, celebrated the rites (τελετὰς τελεῖν) with ecstatic cries (ὀλολυγμοὺς) and beating of the *tumpanon* (*Cleom.* 33.2, *Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur* 56e). This might simply refer to riotous processions of the kind joined by Skules in Olbia two centuries before, but there is a suggestive papyrus fragment, apparently a later copy of a Ptolemaic original:[107]

> ὦ Τριπτόλεμε, ... οὐ σοὶ νῦν μεμύηκα· οὐ γὰρ τὴν Κόρην εἶδον ἡρπασμένην οὐδὲ τῆν Δήμετρα λελυκημένην, ἀλλὰ νεικηφόρους βασιλέας.
>
> (*P. Antinoopolis* 18)
>
> Triptolemos, not for you have I now initiated; for I did not see Kore abducted or the grieving Demeter, but victorious kings.

This seems to say that initiation (μεμύηκα) equivalent to that provided in Eleusis by Demeter, Kore and Triptolemos is now provided by the kings, and this may refer to the activities of Philopator; we cannot be certain.[108]

There are, however, two very interesting documents from the mid or late third century. The first is a Ptolemaic royal edict, quite possibly from the reign of

[105] Powell 1925: 176.

[106] Powell 1925 *ad loc* for other examples of this identification.

[107] Delatte 1952; Nilsson 1957b; Burkert 1993: 269.

[108] Diodorus (1.22.7 = *OF*46) says the rites of Dionysus were introduced to Greece from Egypt, which though not in fact true may be taken to indicate their prominence in that country; see also Sánchez Ortiz de Landaluce 2011.

Philopator (*P. Berlin* 11774).[109] It is addressed to 'those who perform rites to Dionysus in the country' (τοὺς κατὰ τὴν χώραν τελοῦντας τῶι Διονύσωι), and orders them to sail to Alexandria within a certain period, depending on their distance from the city, to report to the authorities and 'immediately both make clear from whom they inherited the sacred objects, for up to three generations, and give in their holy text' (διασαφεῖν δὲ εὐθέως καὶ παρὰ τίνων παρειλήφασι τὰ ἱερὰ ἕως γενεῶν τριῶν καὶ διδόναι τὸν ἱερὸν λόγον), the text to be signed and sealed by them.

The people to whom the edict was addressed were scattered around the country, as the provision for different time limits according to their location makes clear. They are unlikely to have been regular priests attached to temples, as these were already required to report in person at Alexandria annually.[110] It seems, therefore, that they must have been peripatetic private practitioners. They had been established for some time, if they could claim three generations behind them.[111] They had sacred objects that had been passed down to them, which we can perhaps identify with the contents of the *kiste* used in the rites, as mentioned above.

They also had a *hieros logos*, a term used by Herodotus for a religious reason for a certain observance (2.48, 51, 62, 81 = *OF*43, 650; cf. Paus. 8.15.4 = *OF*649), but later by Iamblichus (*VP* 146 = *OF*1144) for a Pythagorean treatise on the gods (τὸν περὶ θεῶν λόγον, ὃν καὶ ἱερὸν διὰ τοῦτο ἐπέγραψεν).[112] What it might mean here is unknown, but Pausanias, describing the worship

[109] Zuntz 1963 gives the text and full discussion; translation in Graf and Johnston 2013: 218-19.

[110] Zuntz 1963: 263-7.

[111] Though ἕως γενεῶν τριῶν is a technical legal term; Zuntz 1963: 231.

[112] Henrichs 2003; Casadesús 2013: 158.

of the Great Gods at Andania, speaks of the rite, or *telete*, being written down (ἐνταῦθα τῶν Μεγάλων θεῶν ἐγέγραπτο ἡ τελετή, 4.26.8; ἡ τελετή ... κατετίθεντο ἐς βίβλους, 4.27.5),[113] and again, he says that when the people of Pheneos celebrate the Greater Rites at the sanctuary of Demeter, they take out writings concerning the rites (γράμματα ... ἔχοντα ἐς τὴν τελετὴν) and read them in the hearing of the initiates (ἐς ἐπήκοον τῶν μυστῶν)(8.15.2). These are public cults, but given that those concerned in Ptolemy's edict were τοὺς τελοῦντας, and the source of the sacred objects they used in the rites was also required, this would be a plausible meaning here. We shall see a possible example shortly.

We do not know why the edict was issued, whether it was to encourage, to regulate or to suppress those to whom it applied.[114] Nor do we have specific information on what the rites involved, or whether they referred to the afterlife. A class of private Dionysiac initiators promising a better fate after death would, however, be at least consonant with what we have seen to be the case by the third century BC.

The second document may be related. This is a papyrus from Gurôb in the Fayum (*P. Gurôb* 1 = *OF*578), dating probably to the middle of the century.[115] Thirty incomplete lines survive, together with a few letters in a second column. Some parts of the text appear to be in hexameters. As far as can be made out, the contents appear to be a mixture of invocations, prayers and ritual instructions to various deities.

[113] Henrichs 2003: 245-50.

[114] Zuntz 1963: 228, 237-9.

[115] Hordern 2000 has photograph, text and commentary; translation in Graf and Johnston 2013: 217-18.

After a reference to raw meat, presumably from a sacrifice (l.2), we have 'through the *telete*' (δια την τελετην, l.3, cf. ιερα καλα, l.9), so we are dealing with some kind of rite or initiation. Then there is something about penalties and fathers: ποινας πατε (l.4). The term *poine* occurs elsewhere in a number of contexts connected with fate after death (*P. Derv.* VI.5, Pind. *Ol.* 2.58 = *OF*445, fr. 133 = *OF*443, gold leaves A2-3), and I shall discuss in a later chapter what this might mean.[116] Here I will just note that West's supplement, often found persuasive,[117] of πατε το πατε[ρων αθεμιστον, 'lawless ancestors',[118] has no authority beyond a wish to bring the papyrus into harmony with the 'Orphic' myth put forward by Olympiodorus in the sixth century AD.[119]

The papyrus goes on, amid much that is obscure, to invoke Brimo, Demeter, Rhea, the Kouretes, Eubouleus, Pallas, Irikepaios (ll.5-22) and finally 'one Dionysus' (εις διονυσος, l.23).[120] This is immediately followed by the word συμβολα, 'tokens' (l.23), which together with συνθεμα, 'password' a little later (l.26) may refer to the kind of statement ('I fasted, I drank the *kukeon*, I took from the *kiste*, I performed and placed in the *kalathos* and from the *kalathos* in the *kiste*')[121] which Clement of Alexandria (*Protr.* 2.18) reports as a *synthema* spoken by the initiates at Eleusis.[122] The lines which follow may then

[116] Chapter Five section 7.

[117] E.g. Graf and Johnston 2013: 150, 217.

[118] Hordern 2000: 136.

[119] Brisson 1992.

[120] Brimo is used of Persephone and other chthonic goddesses; Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 156, Bremmer 2013: 40-1. Eubouleus is prominent in the Eleusinian mysteries, but is also an epithet of Dionysus and Hades; Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 102-4, Bremmer 2013: 37-40. Erikepaios may be connected with a Dionysus cult; Hordern 2000: 138.

[121] The *kukeon* is a barley-water drink; the *kiste* and *kalathos* are different types of baskets.

[122] Cf. Plautus, *Miles gloriosus* 1016, *cedo sígnum, si harunc Báccharum es*. See also Chapter Two section 6 above.

be what remains of similar statements; there is an 'I drank' (επιον) in l.25 and a *kalathos* in l.28. One phrase, 'god through the bosom' (θεος δια κολπου, l.24) is a *sumbolon* of the Sabazian mysteries, according to Clement (*Protr.* 2.16).[123]

The text ends with references to a bull-roarer, knucklebones and a mirror (ρομβος αστραγαλοι ... εσοπτρος, ll. 29-30), which have been identified with the toys used by the Titans in the myth to decoy the child Dionysus, and seem to have been used as cult objects, though our first subsequent reference to them, again in Clement of Alexandria (*Protr.* 2.17-18 = *OF*306), is several centuries later than the Gurôb papyrus.[124] We should not lose sight of the possibility that this part of the myth was invented as an *aition* for the otherwise inexplicable cult objects.

It is certainly clear that the papyrus is concerned with some kind of rite, probably with initiation, and with Dionysus. The presence of so many other divine beings is a puzzle. It might be some kind of ritual to more than one god,[125] but there seem rather too many, and this kind of syncretism more often takes place where the gods are actually identified with each other, which could not be the case with Dionysus, Demeter and Pallas Athene, for example, and in any case is mostly later than the third century. I suggest that it is a rite to Dionysus in which the other gods are invoked in prayer to add their power to what is being performed.

[123] As I noted above, Sabazios and Dionysus were often identified by this period, and Clement was in any case a Christian polemicist prone to confuse the different types of pagan mysteries with one another.

[124] Levaniouk 2007.

[125] Graf and Johnston 2013: 151.

It is possible, therefore, that here we have a *hieros logos* of the type Ptolemy was collecting. If, as I proposed above, this was essentially instructions for the ritual, it would consist of a mixture of actions to be performed, such as collecting the meat after the sacrifice, prayers and invocations to be uttered, sacred objects like the bull-roarer and mirror to be displayed, and formula, *sumbola* or *sunthemata*, to be recited by the initiates. Whether it was concerned with the afterlife we do not know, but that would certainly be consonant with what else we know of Dionysiac initiation cults.

11: Later evidence

Fig. 8. Flagellation scene from Pompeii

Fresco from the *Sala di Grande Dipinto*, Scene VII in the *Villa de Misteri* (Pompeii). By WolfgangRieger - Filippo Coarelli (ed.): Pompeji. Hirmer Verlag, München 2002, ISBN 3-7774-9530-1. p. 357, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6006470

It will be useful to give a brief indication of the chief later evidence. There is a lurid account of the Roman Bacchanalia in Livy, relating to the year 186 BC.[126] One of the conspirators, in her confession, says that initiation originally took place three times each year, by day, for women only, but subsequently it was extended to men, and happened five times a month, by night (39.13.7-9). They then devoted themselves to all kinds of depraved orgies, being killed if they refused (39.13.10-11). It is difficult to know how much of this to believe, but

[126] Nilsson 1957a: 12-21.

it does not sound much like the kind of initiation that we have previously been discussing.

The frescoes in the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii have often been thought to depict Dionysiac initiation.[127] They do include a Silenus and a woman uncovering a *liknon*, as well as a winged female engaged in flagellation (*Fig. 8*),[128] but even if they reflect Dionysiac themes, it is not clear if they represent an actual initiation, and are in any case difficult to interpret.

Plutarch, addressing words of consolation to his wife after the loss of their child, says:

> Καὶ μὴν ἃ τῶν ἄλλων ἀκούεις, οἳ πείθουσι πολλοὺς λέγοντες ὡς οὐδὲν οὐδαμῇ τῷ διαλυθέντι κακὸν οὐδὲ λυπηρόν ἐστιν, οἶδ’ ὅτι κωλύει σε πιστεύειν ὁ πάτριος λόγος καὶ τὰ μυστικὰ σύμβολα τῶν περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον ὀργιασμῶν, ἃ σύνισμεν ἀλλήλοις οἱ κοινωνοῦντες.
>
> (*Cons. uxor.* 611d = *OF*595)
>
> And as to what you hear from others, who convince many when they say that nothing bad or distressing happens to the deceased in any way, I know that the words of our ancestors prevent you believing it, and the tokens of the mysteries of the rites of Dionysus, which we both know and share in.

This is a clear statement that Plutarch was an initiate, and that initiation dealt with fate in the afterlife. We might add to this a reference by Celsus, preserved by Origen. to those who ‘introduce apparitions and terrible things in the Bacchic rites’ (ἐν ταῖς Βακχικαῖς τελεταῖς τὰ φάσματα καὶ τὰ δείματα προεισάγουσι, *c. Cels.* 4.10 = *OF*595).

[127] Nilsson 1957a: 66-76.

[128] See Chapter Eight section 6 below for a possible link to the Erinyes and hostile daimons.

It seems, however, that in the Roman period the role of private initiators was no longer prominent, and the Dionysiac mysteries became integrated into polis society, with the term μύστης perhaps now denoting a member of a religious association rather than an initiate.[129] We come across expressions like οἱ πρὸ πόλεως μύσται, indicating that they are seen in some sense as protectors of the city.[130]

[129] Jaccottet 2005, Bremmer 2014: 100-09.

[130] References in Jaccottet 2005 n32.

12: The development of Dionysiac initiation

The first question I posed at the beginning of this chapter, if there was a Dionysiac initiation cult concerned with the afterlife, is therefore answered. The second question, when and where it came into being, is more difficult. I shall try to sum up the conclusions of the preceding review of the evidence.

The civic festivals of Dionysus and the revels of women on the mountains that were established at the start of the classical period show no trace of an initiatory cult or of any interest in the afterlife. The passing reference in Heraclitus shows only that the revellers were considered unorthodox and regarded with disapproval, at least by Heraclitus. The restriction on burial at Cumae is not clearly connected with fate after death. The bone tablets at Olbia are more problematic, but a reference to the afterlife depends on three scrawled words, and is difficult to reconcile with the rest of the text. Olbia also is a very distant part of the Greek world, and what took place there is not necessarily a guide to what was the case elsewhere. Even by the end of the fifth century in Athens[131] I do not believe that there is any sign of an initiation cult concerned with the afterlife in Euripides' *Bacchae*.

The first real sign of something different comes shortly after this, with the mention of bacchics together with initiates in the gold leaf from Hipponion, evidence for initiation affecting fate in the afterlife in Italy around 400 BC. For Athens, later in the century, we have Plato's saying 'the narthex-bearers are many, the bacchoi few', and that we find in Demosthenes, 'I have escaped the bad and found the better', both of which appear to imply something similar.

[131] The *Bacchae* may have been written in Macedonia, but Euripides had lived in Athens until the last year or two of his life; Dodds 1960: xxxix.

In the third century, the Pelinna gold leaves from Thessaly give Dionysus a leading role when the soul comes before Persephone, and in Egypt the Ptolemaic edict and Gurôb papyrus show that Dionysiac initiation was active there, plausibly also concerned with the afterlife.

It seems then that the development can be dated to somewhere around the beginning of the fourth century. The reasons we can only guess, perhaps the example of Eleusis and the rise of private religious practitioners. The place is more difficult, but the first evidence is from Italy, and then Athens. We could also ask why the cult was associated with Dionysus. Heraclitus (DK22B15) had identified the god with Hades, but this does not seem to have been usual. In Magna Graecia, however, he was often associated in art with Demeter and Persephone in a triad of chthonic deities,[132] and this may be another pointer to an Italian origin.

Of course, the civic festivals for Dionysus continued alongside private initiation, as did the trieteric *orgia*, at least to the time of Pausanias in the second century AD. Whether all initiation was concerned with the afterlife is not certain; as we have seen, some of the evidence, for example that from Egypt, does not mention fate after death. There is, however, no clue to what else might be the purpose of initiation, and it seems a reasonable assumption here that where explicit testimony is lacking this is just due to the fragmentary state of the evidence. It can also be assumed that these cults were all private, as we never hear of Dionysiac initiation or the afterlife in connection with public cults, where the evidence is likely to be more easily available.

[132] Nilsson 1957a: 12, 120.

In the course of this investigation, we have come across some suggestions as to what might be involved in the initiation process, including:

(i) sacred objects (section 10),

(ii) a *hieros logos* of instructions for the process read out to the candidates for initiation (sections 8, 10).

(iii) the promise that the initiate will not lie in mud after death as the non-initiates will (section 7),

(iv) absolution from ancestral guilt (section 10),

(v) the prospect of a rebirth after death, with perhaps a mock death in the initiation (section 6),

(vi) purifications with mud and bran (section 8),

(vii) prayers to other deities for their aid (section 10),

(viii) a formula to be recited by the initiates (sections 8, 10),

(ix) processions through the streets after initiation (section 8),

(x) gold leaves with instructions for the soul after death placed in the tomb (section 6).

Not all of these are reliably connected with Dionysus, and not all of these may have applied to the same initiation rites at the same time, but they do give us some pointers as to what might have occurred.

Chapter Four

Unity and variation in the funerary gold leaves

1: Introduction

Fig. 9. Gold leaf B9

Gold Tablet (Thessaly-The Getty Villa, Malibu) 4th century BC. By Remi Mathis (2011), CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=17688621

A number, currently around forty, of small (4-8 x 1-3 cm) inscribed gold leaves have been discovered in graves in various parts of the Greek world, principally

Magna Graecia, Thessaly and Crete. They can mostly be dated from the fourth to the first centuries BC, though the latest (A5) is from the third century AD. The texts, which are partly in hexameters, seem all to relate to the afterlife.[1] There has, however, been no consensus on their significance and origin, though most scholars connect them with a variously-defined group they identify as Orphics.[2] For this reason, they are often referred to as Orphic gold leaves (or tablets or plates or lamellae).[3] As they do not, in fact, anywhere actually mention either Orphics or Orpheus, I shall call them simply funerary gold leaves.

Their importance lies in the fact that they constitute with the Derveni Papyrus one of the two main unmediated sources of alternative views of the afterlife in the classical period. However difficult they may be to interpret, these are written not by poets, philosophers or orators observing from the outside, but by the practitioners themselves.

In this chapter, I want to investigate them from one particular point of view, as a case study which might throw some light on how far the phenomena we are considering are based on a single coherent doctrine. In a later part of this study,[4] I shall argue that some of the gold leaves share with other sources an

[1] There are convenient recent editions in Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008 (with full apparatus based on Bernabé's Teubner *Orphicorum fragmenta*, Bernabé 2004-7), Edmonds 2011b and Graf and Johnston 2013. Unfortunately these all use completely different numbering systems, as indeed do all previous editions. I have adopted the numeration of Edmonds, which arranges them into groups (A-F) according to similarity of content. I include a concordance table as an appendix.

[2] See Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 1-8 for a physical description, and Edmonds 2011a and Graf in Graf and Johnston 2013: 50-65 for a history of the scholarship. On Orphism, see Chapter Two section 6 above.

[3] 'Orphic gold tablets' Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008; '"Orphic" gold tablets' Edmonds 2011b; 'Bacchic gold tablets' Graf and Johnston 2013.

[4] Chapter Seven section 4 and Chapter Eight.

underlying deep structure in their conception of initiation and the afterlife. Here I want to consider the question of how far the leaves themselves form a unity, and how far they are just a patchwork or *bricolage* of disparate and incompatible elements. I shall try to show that the view that all the leaves are extracts from a single unitary text is misguided, and that they do in fact exhibit considerable and radical variations.

I shall first outline the contents of the two chief groups of gold leaves, and explain why the original supposition that they were of separate origin has more recently tended to be replaced by the view that they are based on a single group with a single primary text. I shall then describe two attempts at reconstructing this, those of Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal and of Riedweg. I shall then put forward my own analysis of the variations in the texts, both between and within groups, concluding that the unitary hypothesis is not viable. Finally, I shall make some suggestions on the model of Greek religion which underpins the arguments for unity, and offer my own alternative.

2: The A and B groups

It has long been observed that the gold leaves fall into two main groupings, called by Zuntz, followed by Edmonds, A and B.[5] In the published texts of the B group, currently numbering twelve,[6] the addressee, apparently the soul in Hades, is directed to drink from a certain spring, flowing from the lake of Memory, often after having avoided another spring; one of the springs is marked by a white cypress. Before it can drink, it must identify itself to guardians of the spring as the child of earth and starry heaven. As an example, I quote one of the fuller of the B leaves, from Petelia in Magna Graecia, dating from the fourth century BC:

> Εὑρήσ{σ}εις δ’ Ἀίδαο δόμων ἐπ’ ἀριστερὰ κρήνην,
> πὰρ δ’ αὐτῆι λευκὴν ἑστηκυῖαν κυπάρισσον·
> ταύτης τῆς κρήνης μηδὲ σχεδὸν ἐμπελάσειας.
> εὑρήσεις δ’ ἑτέραι, τῆς Μνημοσύνης ἀπὸ λίμνης
> ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ προρέον· φύλακες δ’ ἐπίπροσθεν ἔασιν.
> εἰπεῖν· ‘Γῆς παῖς εἰμὶ καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος,
> αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ γένος οὐράνιον· τόδε δ’ ἴστε καὶ αὐτοί.
> δίψηι δ’ εἰμὶ αὖη καὶ ἀπόλλυμαι. ἀλλὰ δότ’ αἶψα
> ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ προρέον τῆς Μνημοσύνης ἀπὸ λίμνης’.
> καὐτ[οι] σ[ο]ι δώσουσι πιεῖν θείης ἀπ[ὸ κρή]νης,
>
> (B1)
>
> You will find in the halls of Hades a spring on the left, and standing by it, a glowing white cypress tree; do not approach this spring at all. You will find another, from the lake of Memory refreshing water flowing forth. But guardians are nearby. Say: ‘I am the child of Earth and starry Heaven; but my race is heavenly; and this you know yourselves. I am parched with thirst and

[5] Zuntz 1971: 277-393, Edmonds 2011b, Graf and Johnston 2013: 61-3.

[6] There are further unpublished ones; Edmonds 2011b: 34.

> I perish; but give me quickly refreshing water flowing forth from the lake of Memory.' And then they will give you to drink from the divine spring.[7]

In the A group (five texts), the soul seems to be addressing Persephone and the other deities of the underworld. It claims to be pure and of the same race as those it addresses. There may be references to striking with lightning, to having paid recompense (ποινὰν) for unjust deeds,[8] to becoming a god instead of a human, and, most puzzling of all, to falling as a kid into milk (ἔριφος ἐς γάλ' ἔπετον, A1, A4).[9] My example is also from fourth century Magna Graecia, this time from Thurii:

> Ἔρχομα<ι> ἐ<κ> κα<θα>ρῶν {σχονων} καθαρά, χ<θ>ονίων βαςίλ{η}ει<α>,
> Εὖκλε καὶ Εὐβουλεῦ {ι} καὶ θεοὶ <καὶ> δαίμο<ν>ε<ς> ἄλλοι·
> καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ὑμῶν γένο<ς> εὔχομαι ὄλβιον εἶναι
> πο<ι>νὰν δ' ἀνταπέ{ι}τε{σε}ι<σ>' ἔργων ἕνεκ' {α} οὔτι δικα<ί>ων.
> εἴτε με Μο<ῖ>ρ' {α} ἐδάμας<σ>' {ατο} εἴτ' {ε} ἀστεροπῆτα κ<ε>ραυνῶν.
> νῦν δ' ἱκέτι<ς> ἥκω πα<ρα>ὶ ἁγνὴ<ν> Φε<ρ>σεφόνε<ι>αν,
> ὥς με{ι} πρόφ<ρ>ω<ν> πέμψη<ι> ἕδρας ἐς εὐαγέ{ι}ων.

(A2)

> Pure I come from the pure, Queen of those below the earth, and Eukles and Eubouleus and the other gods and daimons; for I also claim that I am of your blessed race. Recompense I have paid on account of deeds not just; either Fate mastered me or the thunderer flinging the lightning bolt. Now I come, a suppliant, to holy Phersephoneia, that she, gracious, may send me to the seats of the blessed.[10]

The division between the two groups was clear to Zuntz in 1971, who concluded that 'the A- and B- texts cannot be taken for excerpts from one

[7] Translation of Edmonds 2011b. I have omitted the last three lines, which are incomplete.

[8] See Chapter Five section 7 below.

[9] Lambin 2015 surveys the various explanations that have been offered for this, none particularly convincing.

[10] Translation of Edmonds 2011b.

continuous poem'.[11] The remaining texts then known (Edmonds groups C, E, F) were either simple names of the deceased, greetings to Persephone, or, in one case, apparently random Greek words separated by meaningless letters (C1).[12] The situation changed with further discoveries.[13] These widened the context in which the gold leaves could be seen by references to the mysteries of Dionysus (B10, D1, D2, D4), Brimo, perhaps a name for Demeter or possibly Persephone (D3), Demeter Chthonia and the Mountain Mother (Cybele) (both D5).

More significantly for the question we are now considering, the new leaves suggested that the A and B groups were in fact linked. D1 and D2 both refer to animals falling or leaping into milk (a bull and a ram) in the same way as the A group's A1 and A4 (a kid). They both also refer to Dionysus ('say to Persephone that Bacchios himself has freed you', εἰπεῖν Φερσεφόναι σ' ὅτι Βάκχιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε), as does indirectly the new B10, otherwise a normal member of the B group ('you too will go along the sacred road that the other famed initiates and bacchics travel', ὁδὸν ἔρχεαι ἄν τε καὶ ἄλλοι μύσται καὶ βάκχοι ἱερὰν στείχουσι κλεενοί). They thus have links both to the A and to the B group. Graf sees a further connection in the use of the infinitive εἰπεῖν as an imperative (B1, B2, D1, D2),[14] but this may seem rather tenuous. There are also common references to joining the company of the other fortunate ones,

[11] Zuntz 1971: 384.

[12] See column 2 of Table 2.1 in Edmonds 2011b: 40 for the publication dates of each tablet.

[13] Graf 1991, Graf 1993, Graf and Johnston 2013: 62-4, 131-3.

[14] Graf 1991: 93.

heroes, initiates or blessed (A2, A3, B1,[15] B10, D1, D5),[16] which perhaps do no more than confirm that they all come from an initiation context.

[15] I do not agree with Ferrari 2011d: 210 that ἄλλοισι μεθ' ἡρώεσσιν ἀνάξεις (B1.11) means ruling *over* the other heroes, rather than *with* them. Though this is indeed its normal meaning in epic (perhaps as 'holding the rulership among'), it makes little sense here, and when re-using the epic formula it might naturally be reinterpreted as closer to the contemporary usage of μετά as 'with'.

[16] Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 131-2.

3: The case for unity

The appearance of what seem to be links between the two groups then raises the question of whether they represent a common belief and can be combined into a continuous narrative. Although some scholars have expressed a certain scepticism on this point,[17] this has become a seriously held view, and before examining the evidence I should like to review the two cases where it has been worked out in detail.

Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal, at the end of their detailed commentary on the leaves, put together what, with some reservations, they describe as 'a partial but coherent picture of what the initiates believed', and attempt to 'reconstruct a common scheme on the basis of all these mentions'.[18] During their lifetime, according to Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal, the bearers of the tablet must become aware of both their divine origin and prior guilt, for which a punishment has been paid, have undergone ecstatic rites of initiation and purification, and have preserved this purity by observing certain taboos. The grounds for this are: A1 et al. 'for I also claim that I am of your blessed race' (καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ὑμῶν γένος ὄλβιον εὔχομαι εἶμεν) for divine origin, A2 et al. 'Recompense I have paid on account of deeds not just' (ποινὰν δ' ἀνταπέτεισ' ἔργων ἕνεκ' οὔτι δικαίων) for prior guilt and punishment, D1 'having celebrated rites just as the other happy ones' (τελέσας ἅπερ ὄλβιοι ἄλλοι) for rites, B10 'the other initiates' (ἄλλοι μύσται) for initiation, and A1

[17] Graf 1991: 97 ('les différences restent trop grandes'); Edmonds 2004: 35-7; Bowden 2010: 153-5; Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 131 ('a consistency of broader ideas', but not a single poem). The reconstructions of Janko 1984, 2016a are confined to the B group.

[18] Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 169-78; quotes from 169 and 171.

et al. 'Pure I come from the pure' (Ἔρχομαι ἐκ κοθαρῶν κοθαρά) for purity. That the initiation rites are ecstatic, that purity is achieved through ritual and observance of taboos and that the mention of ποινή, 'recompense', is evidence for both primal guilt and its punishment are their conjectures.

The first part of the soul's journey through Hades after death falls, they believe, into four stages: (1) to select the right road (the one on the right), avoiding the other spring (the lake of Forgetfulness) by the white cypress, (2) give the correct answer to the guardians of the fountain of Mnemosyne, 'I am the son of Earth and starry Heaven' (Γῆς παῖς εἰμι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος), identifying the soul as an initiate who knows the sacred story, (3) drink the water of Mnemosyne, to retain knowledge of the initiation and perhaps also of previous lives, (4) travel the sacred way on to Persephone. This is of course all based on the B-group texts; I shall discuss the difficulties with it when I come to my own analysis.

In the second part of the journey, represented by the A-group, the soul is now before Persephone. It again claims divine origin, and further alludes to what the authors call 'a rite of passage, defined as being struck by lightning';[19] this is based on the statement 'either Fate subdued me or the thunderer throwing lightning' (ἔιτε με Μοῖρα ἐδάμασ' ἔιτε ἀστεροπῆτα κεραυνῶν, A2, similarly A1, A3), but I am not sure what 'a rite of passage, defined as being struck by lightning' means.[20] The soul has at any rate, they believe, reached the end of its punishment for primal guilt, which is the cycle of reincarnation, denoted by 'the cycle ... of wearying heavy grief' (κύκλου ... βαρυπενθέος ἀργαλέοιο, A1) and 'recompense ... on account of deeds not just' (ποινὰν ... ἔργων ἕνεκ' οὔτι

[19] Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 173.

[20] The extended discussion in their commentary (Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 111-14) does not make it much clearer.

δικαίων, A2-3), having been freed by Dionysus (D1-2). The authors are puzzled by the passwords in D3 (Ἀνδρικεπαιδόθυρσον. Ἀνδρικεπαιδόθυρσον. Βριμώ. Βριμώ.), which they decide must either be part of the last stage of the interview with Persephone, or be used in an alternative version.

The soul's final destiny is to go with the other mystai and bacchoi, heroes, happy or limpid[21] ones (A2, A3, B1, B10, D1, D4), have wine as an honour (εὐδαίμονα τιμὴν, D1-2) and join an underworld procession (A4,[22] D5), enter the sacred meadows (A4) and become a god instead of a mortal (A1, A4, A5). The authors believe the meadows are similar to, but not identical with, the Elysian Fields and Isles of the Blessed, and the wine is for the perpetual banqueting alluded to by Plato (*Republic* 363c-d). Here they will become happy, glorious and heroes, though the transformation to a god is not in their opinion to be taken literally. Their new life may, they say, also be 'represented as' a rebirth in the bosom of Persephone ('I passed under the bosom of the underworld mistress queen', δεσποίνας δ' ὑπὸ κόλπον ἔδυν χθονίας βασιλείας, A1), and as a divine kid suckled by her ('a kid I fell into milk', ἔριφος ἐς γάλ' ἔπετον); it is not clear from the term 'represented as' whether they mean that this is another metaphor like the apotheosis or whether something more literal is implied.[23]

[21] Their translation of εὐαγής, perhaps better 'unpolluted' (*LSJ s.v.* εὐαγής A).

[22] This is a disputed reading; see the apparatus in Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008.

[23] They translate ὑπὸ κόλπον ἔδυν as 'I plunged beneath the lap', and from the commentary (Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 130-2) it does seem as if they do indeed envisage the happy soul diving under Persephone's robe and entering her womb, to be ejected again in a new birth. κολπός, however, can variously mean 'bosom', 'lap', 'womb' or 'fold of a robe' (*LSJ s.v*). The commentary notes analogues for their view from other cultures, but the Homeric parallels adduced by Zuntz 1971: 319 (similarly, Bremmer 2016: 42) for the meaning 'came under the protection of' seem more pertinent. See also Kingsley 1995: 267-8, Edmonds 2009b: 91-2n30.

A second attempt at reconstructing a single continuous narrative on which all the funerary gold leaves are based has been made by Riedweg.[24] He believes that they all stem from a single hexametric poem, a *Hieros logos* used in an initiation ceremony, whose content he summarises as follows:[25]

> I. DEATH AND KATABASIS OF THE SOUL: the beginning of the narrative, represented mainly by one verse in A4 (but cf. also B10; B1; B11); the omniscient narrator starts speaking (his substitute within the realm of the ritual of initiation is most likely the hierophant).
>
> II. DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPOGRAPHY IN THE PALACE OF HADES: the two springs, the first 'trial': not to quench one's thirst with the water flowing from the first spring; dialogue with the guardians at the second spring; the path of the *mystai* and *bakkhoi* (leading first towards Persephone, but finally aiming at entering the 'meadows and groves of Persephone'; cf. V.). Principal witnesses to this scene: the leaves of group B.
>
> III. MEETING WITH PERSEPHONE AND THE OTHER GODS: the omniscient narrator (the hierophant) requests the *mystes* to address Persephone (III.a.); the *mystes* tells his or her story, his alienation and reintegration, his fall and liberation, and his desire to enter the 'meadow' (III.b.). Principal witnesses: the leaves of group A, moreover Pelinna line 2 [D1-2] and the prosaic leaves with greetings to the god(s) of the underworld [E group].
>
> IV. EXCHANGE OF THE ORAL SYMBOLS: dialogue with other guardians which forms the last 'trial' before the admission to the 'holy meadow' of Persephone. Witness: the leaf from Pherai (D3); cf. now also D5.
>
> V. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION OF THE BLESSED: which is alluded to in A4, D1-2 and B1.
>
> VI. FINAL ADMONITION OF THE INITIATED: the omniscient narrator (or in the case of the initiation the hierophant) urges that the person he is speaking to guard with great care the things (s)he has learned. Witness: A4.

[24] Riedweg 2011: 246-52; an earlier version in Riedweg 2002.

[25] Riedweg 2011: 247; I have omitted the footnotes and changed the tablet references to the form I am using.

Both the versions of Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal and of Riedweg, which obviously have much in common, are impressive attempts at recreating a unified original that lies behind all the funerary gold leaves. They are, however, predicated on the assumption that such a unified original does exist, and perhaps therefore underplay some serious discrepancies between the leaves. I should like now to look at the evidence without this presupposition, which may lead to different conclusions.

4: Variation in the gold leaves

The results of this analysis are as follows:

(a) *C, E and F groups*

The above reconstructions have been based almost entirely on the A, B and D groups. The one C group leaf, C1, is a mass of apparently meaningless letters in which may possibly be embedded a number of Greek words.[26] The E group (5 texts) each consist of a few words hailing (χαίρειν) Persephone, or Persephone and Plouton (e.g. Φιλίστη Φερσεφόνηι χαίρειν, E3). The F group (13 texts) are even shorter, just giving a name, presumably of the deceased, sometimes with 'initiate' (μύστης) added (e.g. Βοττακός, F10). None of these can be easily fitted into the reconstructions above. This of course does not preclude the A, B and D leaves forming a unity, but it does at least show that a general assumption that all texts on these funerary gold leaves must be of the same kind is not valid; at least some of them must have a different origin or function.

(b) *Changes of speaker*

Another inconsistent characteristic of the gold leaves is the change in the speaker of the texts.[27] This is the case between groups, within groups and within individual texts. In the longer B group texts, the dead person, or the soul of the dead person, is addressed in the second person: 'When you are

[26] Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 137-50.

[27] For narratological analysis see Riedweg 1998, Riedweg 2011: 225-30. Ferrari 2011d: 211-15 discusses the implications for the ritual context.

about to die ... Do not go near to this spring at all' (ἐπεὶ ἄν μέλλησι θανεῖσθαι ... ταύτας τᾶς κράνας μηδὲ σχεδὸν ἐγγύθεν ἔλθης, B10, similarly B1, B2, B11). Later the soul is told what to say to the guardians of the spring: 'Say "I am the child of Earth ...."' (εἶπον· 'Γῆς παῖς εἰμι ...). In the shorter B-texts (B3-9) the opening is omitted and we begin in the first person with the soul addressing the guardians ('I am parched with thirst ...', Δίψαι αὖος ἐγὼ ...), before suddenly switching into dialogue: '"Who are you? From where are you?" "I am the son of Earth ..."' ('τίς δ' ἐσσί; πὼ δ' ἐσσί;' 'Γᾶς υἱός ἠμι ...'). B12, however, starts in the third person ('He is parched with thirst ...', Δίψαι αὖος ...) before switching to the first ('But give me to drink ...', ἀλλὰ πιέν μοι ...) and proceeding as the other short texts, giving three changes of speaker in three lines.

In the interview with Persephone in the A-group, on the other hand, most of the fourth-century texts are in the first person, with the soul addressing the goddess: 'Pure I come from the pure ...' (Ἔρχομαι ἐκ κοθαρῶν κοθαρά ...). At the end of A1 there is a sudden unheralded switch into the second person before returning equally abruptly to the first: 'I passed beneath the bosom of the Mistress ... A god you shall be instead of a mortal ... A kid I fell into milk' (ὑπὸ κόλπον ἔδυν χθονίας βασιλείας ... θεὸς δ' ἔσηι ἀντὶ βροτοῖο ... ἔριφος ἐς γάλ' ἔπετον). A4, though, gives similar content in the second person ('A kid you fell into milk', ἔριφος ἐς γάλα ἔπετες), while the late text A5 is mostly in the third ('Pure she comes from the pure ...',Ἔρχεται ἐκ καθαρῶν καθαρά ...). Finally D1-2, also dealing with the interview with Persephone, are in the second person.

I do not want to over-emphasise the significance of this variation, but it does make it difficult to see these as all extracts from a single poem. At least, whatever the original or originals the writers of the leaves were working from, some or all of them must have been considerably mangled before reaching the

state in which we now have them. Also, if we are considering them as all part of one continuous narrative, it is certainly suspicious that a primarily second-person text in the B-group has switched to a primarily first-person one in the A-group.

(c) *The topography of Hades: springs and cypresses*

One might of course say that details of who is speaking are a superficial aspect of the presentation; what is essential is the accuracy of the instructions to the departing soul. The B-group texts give very clear and specific instructions on the topography of the underworld and what the soul must do. Unfortunately, the texts by no means agree among themselves as to what this is.

There are in fact four versions:

(i) There are two springs. The one to avoid ('Do not go near this spring at all', ταύτας τᾶς κράνας μηδὲ σχεδὸν ἐγγύθεν ἔλθηις) is on the right, marked by a white cypress.[28] Further along (πρόσσω)[29] is the spring from which the soul must drink. (B2, B10, B11).

(ii) There are two springs. The one to avoid is on the left, marked by a white cypress. The other spring is the one to drink from. (B1).

(iii) There is just one spring, the one to drink from. It is on the right, marked by a white cypress. (B3-8).

[28] There is no such tree, cypresses all being dark. Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 25-8 review the various speculations that have been made as to its significance, none particularly convincing, as Bremmer 2016: 35-6 notes.

[29] Except in B10, where we have πρόσθεν, 'before', though this is still translated as 'further along' in all the editions cited; see Janko 1984: 94 for discussion.

(iv) There is just one spring, the one to drink from. We are not told if it is on the left or right, but to the right of the spring there is a white cypress. (B9, B12).

To summarise: there is one spring (8 leaves) or two (4 leaves); you must avoid the spring on the right (3 leaves) or the left (1 leaf); the spring on the right is to be drunk from (6 leaves) or avoided (3 leaves); the cypress marks the good spring (8 leaves) or the bad spring (4 leaves). It is hard to see how you might get a greater variety of contradictory instructions in so limited a number of texts. Apart from the generally homogeneous group of version (iii), all Cretan and relatively late, there is no observable correlation of date and place.[30]

I do not see how any hypothesis of successive copying errors from an original authoritative text could account for such radical divergences. In a literary treatment of myth, it was possible, and even customary, for a poet to adapt the myth according to his personal preferences. This, however, is presented as an authoritative religious text giving the essential instructions for the salvation of the deceased, in which one might imagine faithfulness and accuracy of transmission were vital.[31]

(d) *Changes in the sequence*

[30] Version (i) Italy / Sicily / Thessaly 5th/4th/3rd century BC; version (ii) Italy 4th century BC; version (iii) Crete 2nd/1st century BC; version (iv) Thessaly / Crete 4th/2nd/1st century BC.

[31] For half-hearted attempts to explain away the variants, see Zuntz 1971: 367-70, Janko 1984: 93, Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 22-3 ('this divergence, which, in any case, is minor'), Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 99. Suggestions such as that the spring was switched to the right because right is usually good, left bad, or that a second spring was added from a wish to discriminate between the initiates and the ordinary dead (though the two-spring versions are the earlier, see previous note), assume that the authors could alter the authoritative religious text at will, which, as I argue here, should not be the case. There is no warrant in the texts for Johnston's hypothesis (Graf and Johnston 2013: 100-3) of a threefold division of the souls (Torjussen 2010: 62-3).

In the reconstructions, there is a clear sequence. After drinking from the spring, the soul goes on to the interview with Persephone, claims its divine heritage and proceeds to its fortunate destination. There are, however, elements which do not fit in to this pattern:

(i) D3 lists passwords the soul presumably must speak ('Andrikepaidothurson. Brimo.', Ἀνδρικεπαιδόθύρσον. Βριμώ.), as does B11 (actual passwords missing). There seems no place for these in the reconstructed sequence.

(ii) In D1-2, the soul goes straight to Persephone without drinking from any spring ('Now you have died ... on this very day. Say to Persephone ...', Νῦν ἔθανες ... ἄματι τῶιδε. εἰπεῖν Φερσεφόναι ...). Also, instead of the claim to divine race, the soul is instructed to 'say to Persephone that Bacchios himself freed you' (εἰπεῖν Φερσεφόναι σ' ὅτι Βάκχιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε).

(iii) There are two references to the sacred meadows (λειμῶνας ἱεροὺς) to which the soul is bound, presumably the same as the seats of the pure (A2, A3) to which it is sent by Persephone. In A4, however, the soul goes there directly, without seeing Persephone, and in D3 immediately after reciting the passwords.

(e) *New gods*

As noted above, in D1-2 the soul has to tell Persephone it has been freed by Bacchios himself.[32] This seems to give a key role to Dionysus, which makes it strange that he is not mentioned elsewhere (there are brief references to bacchics in B10 and to a priestess of Dionysus in D4). In D5, by contrast, two

[32] βάκχαι and βάκχοι were the frenzied worshippers of Dionysus, and βάκχιος or βακχεῖος an epithet of Dionysus meaning 'god of the bacchoi', though later βάχκος came to be used for the god himself; Santamaría 2013: 39-45.

different divinities, Demeter and Cybele,[33] provide the warrant for salvation: 'Send me to the thiasos of the initiates. I have seen the festivals of Demeter Chthonia, and the rites of the Mountain Mother' (πέμπε με πρὸς μυστῶν θιάσους· ἔχω ὄργια [ἰδοῦσα] Δήμετρος Χθονίας τε τέλη καὶ Μητρὸς ὀρείας).[34] Demeter and Cybele may also be concealed among the meaningless letters of C1 (ΕΠΑΚΥΒΕΛΕΙΑΚΟΡΡΑΟΣΕΝΤΑΙΗΔΗΜΗΤΡΟΣΗΤ).[35]

(f) *Double claim to divine race*

More fundamentally for the structure, it is striking that in the reconstructed unified sequence, the soul has to identify itself as of divine lineage not once, but twice. To the guardians of the spring in the B-group it must say 'I am the child of Earth and starry Heaven; but my race is heavenly; and this you know yourselves' (Γῆς παῖς εἰμι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος, αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ γένος οὐράνιον, B1).[36] Then to Persephone, in the A-group, it claims 'I also am of your blessed race' (καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ὑμῶν γένος ὄλβιον εὔχομαι εἶμεν, A1-3). That we never get both claims in the same leaf suggests that they are alternative versions.

(g) *Apotheosis*

[33] As the Mountain Mother (Μητρὸς Ὀρεί[ας]), which seems to be a Greek translation of the Phrygian *matar kubileya*, which came into Greek as Κυβέλη and Latin as Cybele; Roller 1999: 66-8.

[34] Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 200-5 attempts to connect them with Dionysus by proposing what she describes as a 'mythic complex' and a 'multi-generational saga' that would involve them all; this is unattested.

[35] Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 137-50.

[36] 'But' (αὐτὰρ) seems to imply an opposition between being the child of Heaven (παῖς Οὐρανοῦ) and being of heavenly race (γένος οὐράνιον), but see Chapter Seven section 4 below for discussion.

The soul which has successfully navigated its way through the springs and cypresses or spoken the right words when required will join the other happy ones (ὄλβιοι, D1), heroes (ἡρώεσσιν, B1), initiates (μύσται, B10, D5) and bacchoi (βάχχοι, B10) in the seats of the pure (ἕδρας εὐαγέων, A2-3). In three cases, however, it undergoes something more than this: 'a god you shall be instead of a mortal' (θεὸς δ' ἔσηι ἀντὶ βροτοῖο, A1), 'a god you have become from a human' (θεὸς ἐγένου ἐξ ἀνθρώπου, A4), 'come, having become a goddess by the law' (νόμωι ἴθι δῖα γεγῶσα, A5).

Johnston explains this as an extension of the claim to divine lineage, and Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal as not to be taken literally,[37] but neither explanation is really convincing: they have clearly changed status and 'become' a god, not always were one, and if it were a figure of speech we would expect 'become *like* a god' or something of the kind.[38] There is in fact a radical difference between an ordinary human becoming happy, blessed or even a hero and becoming a god, something very unusual in Greek religion, apart from the case of Hellenistic rulers. The notable exception is Empedocles, who claimed to go around as 'an immortal god, no longer mortal' (θεὸς ἄμβροτος οὐκέτι θνητός, DK31B112) and believed eminent men would become divine (DK31B146).[39] We seem, then, to have a sub-group of the leaves which take a similar position to his.[40]

[37] Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 124; Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 178.

[38] E.g. βῆ δ' ἴμεν ἐκ θαλάμοιο θεῷ ἐναλίγκιος ἄντην, 'and went on his way from the chamber like a god in presence', *Od.* 2.5 = 4.310; φαίνεταί μοι κῆνος ἴσος θέοισιν, 'he seems to me equal to the gods', Sappho 31.1; ζήσεις δὲ ὡς θεὸς ἐν ἀνθρώποις, 'you will live as a god among men', (Epicurus) D.L. 10.135.

[39] See Wright 1995 *ad locc.*; Panagiotou 1983. Kingsley 1995: 251-69 makes the connection between Empedocles and the gold leaves, but assumes that this applies to all the leaves.

[40] I note a further possible divergence regarding reincarnation in Chapter Five Section 5 below.

We can now sum up the results of this analysis:

(a) Many of the gold leaves (the C, E and F groups) cannot be fitted into a unified reconstruction.

(b) The changes of speaker between first and third person suggest both that the A and B groups have a different origin and that the texts had undergone considerable variation.

(c) There are radical differences in the crucial instructions on drinking from the spring, which are difficult to explain merely by mistakes in copying.

(d) There are also a number of divergences in the sequence of events.

(e) Some leaves give a key role to gods not otherwise mentioned, notably Dionysus.

(f) Claims to divine lineage are made both in the B group and in the A group, which might more likely be taken as alternative versions than as a double claim.

(g) A few leaves make the unusual assertion that the deceased has become a god.

The variation is therefore both extensive and of many different kinds. We began by considering the simple question of whether the A and B groups were separate or formed a unity. We are now in a position to refine this a little. We should first acknowledge that all the gold leaves that are intelligible and are of more than a few words have some things in common. They all deal with the actions of the soul after death. Many of them, from all groups, refer to the soul's divine lineage. And they all seem to offer that soul a happy fate if it

performs certain actions, whether this is drinking from a spring or making certain statements.

There is, however, no evidence that the A and B groups have a common origin or are part of the same sequence. They are obviously set in different scenery, one in a landscape of springs and trees and the other in the presence of the underworld deities.[41] One is primarily in the second person, the other in the first. One has a key role for memory, the other for purity. They have duplicate claims to the soul's divine lineage. There are also many significant variants within each group. The key instructions in the B group on which spring to drink from are contradictory. There are sometimes claims to apotheosis in the A group, and the otherwise similar D group introduces passwords and appeals to the rites of Dionysus and other gods.

[41] Herrero de Jáuregui 2015: 685-92 draws an interesting contrast between the gradual change to a better state implied by progress along a path in the B texts and the abrupt change implied in the A text vocabulary of falling into milk or flying out of the cycle.

5: A new model for the gold leaves

There is a further significant point to consider. The poor quality of these texts has frequently been commented on: 'not highly literate' (Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal), 'horrible hybrid forms' (Janko), 'numerous writing errors and violations of metric rules' (Riedweg).[42] A few examples: in A1 the words καὶ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι which end line 2 have been accidently repeated in line 4, where they make little sense; in a highly constricted space (51 x 36 mm) on a very valuable material this argues a good deal of carelessness. In B12, only four lines long, the last line is so corrupt that its sense is probably unrecoverable. In B4 ἀπόλλυμαι has been rendered ἀπόλλυμαμαι. In B5 αὖος, 'parched', is followed by the meaningless λαυσς, apparently an incompetent repetition.[43] It seems likely, therefore, that those who inscribed or supervised the inscriptions had only an imperfect understanding of what they were copying.

We should at this point mention the theory of Janko, that the B texts were all based on a single archetype taught to each initiate by the initiator, and subsequently transcibed from memory on to the gold leaves by the initiates themselves, their failure to remember the text correctly accounting for the variations.[44] In support of this, he reconstructs the first three lines as follows:[45]

Μνημοσύνης τόδε ἔργον· ἐπεὶ ἂν μελλησι θανεῖσθαι

[42] Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 2; Janko 1984: 90; Riedweg 2011: 221.

[43] There are further examples in Janko 1984.

[44] Janko 1984, 2016a.

[45] Janko 2016a: 107-10, 124 (Janko's translation). See also on these lines Ferrari 2011d: 206-10.

> ἐν χρυσίῳ τόδε γραψάσθω μεμνημένος ἥρως,[46]
> μὴ τὸν γ' ἐκπάγλως ὑπάγοι σκότος ἀμπφικαλύψας.
>
> This is the task of Memory. When a hero faces death, let him recall and get this graved on gold, lest the murk cover him and lead him down in dread.

I find this theory difficult to accept. The supposed preamble is based on fragmentary texts of only three leaves,[47] of which one transcriber (B10) seems to have forgotten that the work of Memory is to prepare a gold leaf, and thinks it is what he is to do in Hades, and another (B1) has forgotten that the preamble comes at the beginning and tacks it on at the end. Nor do bad memories account for the repetitions noted above. While it is plausible that they might misremember conventional or unfamiliar phrases, it is less so that they would confuse key information such as which spring to approach, at least if they took the matter at all seriously.

In fact, it seems unlikely in itself that they would be told to copy from memory, rather than being given the correct text as they must have been for the initiation ceremony. It also seems odd that they are addressed as 'hero', as apart from legendary figures like Achilles and Ajax, who are obviously not in question here, anyone called a hero is normally dead.[48] Janko presumably takes this as a proleptic use, as if describing someone approaching death as 'the deceased'. I do not think that he has made a sufficient case.

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[46] Cf. the earlier suggestion of West (1975: 232) ἐν πίνακι χρυσέῳ] τόδε γραψ]άτω ἠδὲ φορείτω.

[47] B1.12-14 νης τοδ ερ ... θανεισθ / τοδε γραψ / παγλως υπα οι σκοτος αμφικαλυψας, B10.1-2 Μναμοςύνας τόδε ἔργον. ἐπεὶ ἂν μέλλῃσι θανεὶσθαι / εἰς Ἀίδαο δόμους εὐήρεας, B11.1-3 λησι θανεισθαι / εμνημενος ηρως / σκοτος αμφικαλυπσας. I cite the text of Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008. For doubts on the authenticity of B11, known only through the transcription in Frel 1994, see Janko 2016a: 100-1.

[48] Ekroth 2015.

Returning to the reconstructions of Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal and Riedweg, there seems to lie behind them a model, never made entirely explicit, of some kind of priests of some kind of sect, copying, perhaps at several removes from the original, an authoritative religious text, a *Hieros logos.*[49] The errors and variants would then stem partly from the priests' own limited literacy and command of Greek, partly perhaps from some desire to vary the literary form, and partly by the errors introduced by successive copying. I believe that this cannot plausibly account for the extent of the variation that I have outlined, and that therefore we should look to a different model.[50]

It is a natural, if usually unspoken, assumption of those trying to interpret the fragmentary evidence for phenomena in the ancient world that the participants themselves must have understood what they were doing, that our problems are due to our own ignorance, and so that if we could interrogate those buried with the gold leaves, or certainly those responsible for writing them, all would be made clear. I should like to suggest that this may not be true, at least in this case. The model I propose is one in which the texts are copied by individual practitioners from texts handed down by their family or

[49] The term as used by Riedweg 2011: 238, 246 may be anachronistic. It is used by Herodotus (2.48, 51, 62, 81 = *OF*43, 650) in the narrow sense of a religious reason for a certain observance; its significance in the perhaps late 3rd century Ptolemaic decree concerning those who perform rites for Dionysus (*P. Berlin* 11774, see Chapter Three section 10 above*)* is more uncertain. See Henrichs 2003. Iamblichus (*VP* 146 = *OF*1144) ascribes a work called *hieros logos* to Pythagoras (Casadesús 2013:158), but even if he did in fact write it the title may be later.

[50] This chapter was written before I came across the work of Torjussen 2010: 61-88, who reaches very similar conclusions to my own. For other suggestions of the importance of *bricolage* in the gold leaves, see Edmonds 2004: 4, Ferrari 2011d: 205-10, Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 94.

masters, texts deriving from a wide variety of original sources, without much understanding of what they are copying.[51]

There would doubtless be cross-contamination between them as they sought to emulate rival practitioners. A possible example of what I mean is the extension of the kid falling into milk, whatever this means, that appears in A1 and A4, to the even stranger (as they are adult animals) bull and ram falling or jumping into milk in D1 and D2. Perhaps the authors of the latter had no idea what the phrase meant, but were just trying to make their version sound more impressive by varying and multiplying the animals.[52] That is of course just one possible explanation, but it is as plausible as any other that has been put forward.

This model would, I believe, better account for the variations and errors that we have seen. What they are evidence for, then, is not the secret and coherent doctrine of an unnamed sect, but rather a miscellaneous selection of different and not necessarily compatible contemporary views and initiatory practices.

A useful comparison might be with a group of texts on lead tablets associated with the *Ephesia Grammata*, a sequence of apparently meaningless words (ἄσκι, κατάσκι, λίξ, τετράξ, δαμναμενεύς, αἴσιον) well known throughout antiquity and credited with considerable magical force.[53] Bernabé considers the formula to have been produced by successive corruptions of an original

[51] Bowden 2010: 155 suggests that they were copied by the goldsmiths who provided the gold leaf, but there would surely have been some kind of direction from a religious expert, at least initially.

[52] '[H]yperbolic and grotesque variations of an original ἔριφος-phrase' (Tsantsanoglou and Parássoglou 1987: 13).

[53] Bernabé 2013a; texts of tablets (and one papyrus) at 78-83.

hexameter incantation of which parts survive on the lead tablets.[54] For example, the meaningless κατάσκι woud come from the original meaningful κατὰ σκιαρῶν ὀρέων ('down the shady mountains'); both versions are found on the tablets.[55] He suggests that references in these texts to a goat from the garden of Persephone being milked connect them to the groves of Persephone (A4) and a kid or other animal falling into milk (A1, A4, D1-2) in the gold leaves. However, as Edmonds points out,[56] falling into milk is by no means the same thing as being milked; also, the groves are the destination of the deified soul, not some kind of pasture. While a connection with the gold leaves is quite plausible, the groves, goats and milk must have been picked up and used in quite a different way, just as I have argued occurs with the gold leaves themselves.

A further conclusion might be drawn from this study of unity and variation. The only substantial evidence for the unity of the A and B groups, apart from their promise of a happier life after death, is, as I described above, that the more recently discovered leaves show that Dionysus or bacchics may occasionally be involved in either group. Therefore, it is assumed, they both emanate from a Bacchic sect.

This view is not confined to those who argue for the unity of the two groups; even those, like Graf and Johnston, who think the groups of different origin believe all the texts to be Bacchic on the basis of the four that mention

[54] Bernabé 2013a: 84-5.

[55] The corruption must have occurred at an early stage, as κατάσκι is already found on tablets from the fifth and fourth centuries BC (Bernabé tablets C, E, F); the intelligible form κατὰ σκιαρῶν ὀρέων is surprisingly still current six centuries later (tablet A).

[56] Edmonds 2013a: 104.

Dionysus or bacchics (D1-2, B10, D4).[57] Graf's argument is essentially that the texts must all be produced by the same cult, and as a few mention Dionysus and no other cult seems likely, then this is probably Dionysiac.[58] I have examined in the previous chapter the evidence for a Dionysiac mystery cult concerned with the afterlife, but there is nothing to connect it with any of the gold leaves apart from these four.[59] The assumption that all the texts must be produced by the same cult is of course basic to making the connection.

Behind this assumption, I suggest, lies a paradigm of Greek religion patterned on a monotheistic religion such as Christianity, where there are clearly-defined and differentiated groups with non-overlapping adherents, doctrines and rites. If, in fact, Dionysus might be introduced in many different contexts by many different groups, then this argument collapses. There is no evidence that the monotheistic model is appropriate for the kind of phenomena we are discussing, or for Greek religion as a whole.[60]

[57] Graf and Johnston 2013; their title is *Ritual texts for the afterlife: Orpheus and the Bacchic gold tablets.*

[58] Graf and Johnston 2013: 137-66.

[59] Schlesier 2001: 170-2 sees other parallels with Dionysus, such as the lightning in A1-2 and the lightning that struck Semele, or the lake of Memory in the B texts and the sanctuary of Dionysus in the Marshes at Athens, but, as these examples suggest, none are especially close.

[60] See Burkert 1982 for an illuminating discussion.

Chapter Five

Metempsychosis and related matters

1: Introduction

In this chapter I want to examine the doctrine sometimes held in classical Greece that the human soul does not perish after death, but returns to earth reincarnated in another body. This came to be called μετεμψύχωσις, μετενσωμάτωσις or παλιγγενεσία,[1] though these terms seem all to date to after the classical period.[2] In English it is variously referred to as metempsychosis, reincarnation or transmigration of souls. As will become apparent, there are many variations in the details of how this is said to have occurred.

[1] Bartoš 2015: 213.

[2] μετεμψύχωσις and παλιγγενεσία are used in a citation from Aristoxenus in [Iambl.] (fr. 12 = *Theol. Ar.* 40 p. 52, 8 de Falco) but this is quite likely not Aristoxenus' original terminology; otherwise the first attested uses seem to be in Chrysippus.

I shall also try to see how it relates to other concepts such as the existence of justice in the afterlife and the idea of the soul as a harmony. It will be convenient to discuss here some ideas that are often linked with metempsychosis, those of the body as the tomb of the soul and the soul's payment of a penalty. A large part of the scanty evidence for this belief in metempsychosis comes in the references to it in the works of Plato, and I shall link this to my earlier discussion of Plato's myths of the soul.[3] I shall also comment on how metempsychosis might relate to private initiation offering the prospect of a better fate after death.

The origin of these ideas is completely uncertain. They are sometimes attributed to a foreign source, or to unspecified ancient theologians (παλαιοὶ θεολόγοι, Philol. DK44B14 = *OF*430) or the like,[4] but this does not appear to be based on any real knowledge. Herodotus (2.123 = *OF*423) says the Egyptians were the first to hold this theory, but he was inclined to believe that all wisdom originated in Egypt, and in fact there is no evidence for metempsychosis there.[5] India, where there was indeed such a doctrine, might seem more likely, but, though the dates are uncertain, it appears to have really taken hold there only after its appearance in Greece.[6] There is no sign of it in Siberian shamanism, with which it has sometimes been connected.[7] The fourth century BC historian Theopompus traces the idea to the Persian magi,

[3] Chapter Two section 4.

[4] Edmonds 2013b: 283.

[5] Long 1948: 5-6.

[6] Keith 1909; Bremmer 2002: 24.

[7] Dodds 1951: 135-78 for the suggestion, refuted by Obeyesekere 2002: 200-1.

but this is also very doubtful.[8] The origin of the theory is, however, not directly relevant to my purpose of examining its occurrence in classical Greece.

As in the last chapter, I shall try to demonstrate that we are not dealing with the coherent and consistent doctrine of some sect, but rather with a patchwork of often incompatible ideas that were taken up by different people at different times.

[8] ὃς καὶ ἀναβιώσεσθαι κατὰ τοὺς Μάγους φησὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ ἀθανάτους ἔσεσθαι, καὶ τὰ ὄντα ταῖς αὐτῶν ἐπικλήσεσι διαμενεῖν. ταῦτα δὲ καὶ Εὔδημος ὁ Ῥόδιος ἱστορεῖ. (*FGrH* 115 F64 = D.L. 1.9 = *OF*472, 656) 'He says that according to the Magi humans will live again and be immortal, and the things that are will endure through their invocations. Eudemus of Rhodes also recounts this.' On the magi, see Chapter One section 6 above.

2: Sources for metempsychosis before Plato

Before going on to discuss particular topics, it may be useful to summarise the sources on which we rely for our knowledge of metempsychosis in classical Greece.[9] Plato forms a special case with which I shall deal separately below.[10]

The name with which metempsychosis is especially associated is Pythagoras.[11] Pythagoras, however, left no writings, and much of what we are told of him comes from the Neoplatonic lives written many centuries later, which combine older sources with an accumulation of legend and Neopythagorean speculation. Porphyry says that he taught that the soul changes into other kinds of living things (μεταβάλλουσαν εἰς ἄλλα γένη ζῷων) and was the first to introduce these teachings into Greece (εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα τὰ δόγματα πρῶτος κομίσαι ταῦτα Πυθαγόρος, *VP* 19 = DK14A8); the master himself had once been the minor Homeric hero Euphorbus (*VP* 26). Iamblichus makes similar statements (*VP* 63, 85).

The evidence from the classical period itself is very limited. The earliest is an epigram by Xenophanes (*Anth. Pal.* 7.120), a later contemporary of Pythagoras, which represents him as recognising the soul of a dead friend in a dog someone was beating.[12] This is clearly satirical, but would have no point unless Pythagoras was thought to believe in metempsychosis. Empedocles,

[9] Long 1948 is still the fullest general survey. See also Casadio 1991, Bernabé 2013b: 127-32.

[10] Section 4.

[11] Surveys of the evidence in Long 1948: 13-28, Burkert 1972: 120-4.

[12] καὶ ποτέ μιν στυφελιζομένου σκύλακος παριόντα / φασὶν ἐποικτεῖραι, καὶ τόδε φάσθαι ἔπος: / παῦσαι, μηδὲ ῥάπιζ', ἐπειὴ φίλου ἀνέρος ἐστὶ / ψυχή, τὴν ἔγνων, φθεγξαμένης ἀίων.

slightly later, refers to a wise man whose experience covers ten or twenty generations (DK31B129), but the identity is uncertain, though it was later assumed to be Pythagoras.[13]

Aristotle speaks of 'the tales of the Pythagoreans that any soul might clothe itself in any body' (κατὰ τοὺς Πυθαγορικοὺς μύθους τὴν τυχοῦσαν ψυχὴν εἰς τὸ τυχὸν ἐνδύεσθαι σῶμα, *De an.* 407b); ἐνδύεσθαι is commonly used in the context of metempsychosis.[14] Another fourth century author, Heraclides of Pontus, recounts how Pythagoras gave a full list of his earlier incarnations in addition to Euphorbus (D.L. 8.1.4-5); Heraclides was a writer of Platonic dialogues,[15] and may well have been inventing this as part of the setting of his dialogue in the same way as Plato does, but again it shows that Pythagoras had the reputation of a believer in reincarnation. Theophrastus says that Pythagoras believed animals to have the same souls as humans (εἰ φαίνοντο κατὰ Πυθαγόραν καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν τὴν αὐτὴν εἰληχότα τὰ ζῷα, Porph. *Abst.* 3.26), which is at least consistent with metempsychosis.

It is clear, then, that metempsychosis was known in Greece by at least the beginning of the fifth century, and was associated with Pythagoras. It was not the only view of the soul associated with him: Plato (*Phd.* 86b-c) describes a theory plausibly attributed to the Pythagorean Philolaus in which the soul is a mixture and harmony of the elements (κρᾶσιν εἶναι καὶ ἁρμονίαν αὐτῶν τούτων τὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῶν) and if the harmony is broken by disease it must

[13] Wright 1995 *ad loc*.

[14] Burkert 1972: 121n5.

[15] Gottschalk 1980: 8-9, 114-17, Dillon 2014: 257-60.

perish (τὴν μὲν ψυχὴν ἀνάγκη εὐθὺς ὑπάρχει ἀπολωλέναι).[16] This is clearly not compatible with metempsychosis.

The situation with other Presocratics is less clear. The evidence for Heraclitus rests primarily on one fragment: 'For souls it is death to become water, for water it is death to become earth; out of earth water comes to be, and out of water soul'.[17] This has something in common with the idea that the soul goes through a cycle of reincarnations in all types of species, but is clearly not identical with it.

Parmenides says of his goddess that she 'sends the souls, now from the visible into the invisible, now back again' (καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς πέμπειν ποτὲ μὲν ἐκ τοῦ ἐμφανοῦς εἰς τὸ ἀειδές, ποτὲ δὲ ἀνάπαλίν φησιν, DK28adB13), which seems most naturally interpreted as referring to reincarnation. She also 'rules the hateful birth and copulation of all things', (πάντα γὰρ <ἢ> στυγεροῖο τόκου καὶ μίξιος ἄρχει, DK28B12), where the term στυγερός, 'hateful', seems to convey an element of disgust that would be inappropriate in a mere reference to the pains of labour, and can therefore be connected with the concept, which I shall explore further below, of the cycle of reincarnation as a punishment from which the soul has to be freed.[18] Although it is therefore plausible to link

[16] Discussion at Barnes 1979: ii.186-93.

[17] ψυχῆσιν θάνατος ὕδωρ γενέσθαι, ὕδατι δὲ θάνατος γῆν γενέσθαι· ἐκ γῆς δὲ ὕδωρ γίνεται, ἐξ ὕδατος δὲ ψυχή, DK22B36. Cf. also fragment 60 ('the way up and down is one and the same') and fragment 62 discussed in section 6 below. See Santamaría 2011: 243-50.

[18] Burkert 1972: 283-5. Cf. Empedocles DK31B115.12 quoted below. I examine this question in section 5.

Parmenides with metempsychosis,[19] we have no further clue to what this might entail for his philosophy.

In the case of Empedocles, I believe there can be little doubt of his adherence to metempsychosis.[20] He says that no wise man could believe that before and after what they call a lifetime (τὸ δὴ βίοτον καλέουσι) they were nothing (πρὶν δὲ πάγεν καὶ ἐπεὶ λύθεν, οὐδὲν ἀρ' εἰσίν, DK31B15). He refers to mortals who die many times (θνητῶν ... πολυφθερέων ἀνθρώπων, DK31B113), and to clothing something, presumably the soul, in an unfamiliar garment of flesh (σαρκῶν ἀλλογνῶτι περιστέλλουσα χιτῶνι, DK31B126 = *OF*450). He describes how he himself has been 'before now once boy and girl and bush and bird and a mute fish in the sea' (ἤδη γάρ ποτ' ἐγὼ γενόμην κοῦρός τε κόρη τε θάμνος τ'οἰωνός τε καὶ ἔξαλος ἔλλοπος ἰχθύς, DK31B117). Two fragments (DK31B127 = *OF*451, 146) seem to refer to selected souls becoming incarnated as laurels among trees, lions among beasts and as prophets, leaders and so forth among men, before eventually becoming gods.

The fullest statement of this belief is the following:

> ἔστιν Ἀνάγκης χρῆμα, θεῶν ψήφισμα παλαιόν,
> ἀίδιον, πλατέεσσι κατεσφρηγισμένον ὅρκοις·
> εὖτέ τις ἀμπλακίησι φόβῳ φίλα γυῖα †μιν† [φόνῳ φίλα γυὶα μιήνῃ],[21]
> †ὅς καὶ† ἐπίορκον ἁμαρτήσας ἐπομόσσῃ,
> δαίμονες οἵτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο
> τρίς μιν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι,
> φυομένους παντοῖα διὰ χρόνου εἴδεα θνητῶν

[19] He is also an alternative candidate to Pythagoras for Empedocles' wise man knowing ten or twenty generations (DK31B129); Wright 1995 *ad loc*.

[20] On Empedocles and metempsychosis, see Long 1948: 45-62, Zuntz 1971: 181-274, Wright 1995, Obeyesekere 2002: 216-32, Primavesi 2008, Megino Rodríguez 2011b. For references to more sceptical views, see Megino Rodríguez 2011b: 269, Primavesi 2008: 265-6.

[21] For discussion of this crux, see section 4 below.

> ἀργαλέας βιότοιο μεταλλάσσοντα κελεύθους.
> αἰθέριον μὲν γάρ σφε μένος πόντονδε διώκει,
> πόντος δ' ἐς χθονὸς οὖδας ἀπέπτυσε, γαῖα δ' ἐς αὐγὰς
> ἠελίου φαέθοντος, ὁ δ' αἰθέρος ἔμβαλε δίναις·
> ἄλλος δ' ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγέουσι δὲ πάντες.
> τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης,
> νείκεϊ μαινομένῳ πίσυνος.
>
> (DK31B115 = *OF*449)

> There is an oracle of Necessity, an ancient decree of the gods, eternal, sealed by broad oaths: whenever one in error, from fear, ? his own limbs [defiles his own limbs through murder],[22] having by his error made false the oath he swore – daimons to whom life long-lasting is apportioned – he wanders from the blessed ones for three times countless seasons, being born throughout the time as all kinds of mortal forms, exchanging one hard way of life for another. For the force of air pursues him into sea, and sea spits him out onto earth's surface, earth casts him into the rays of blazing sun, and sun into the eddies of air; one takes him from another, and all abhor him. I too am now one of these, an exile from the gods and a wanderer, having put my trust in raving strife.

The term 'daimon' is unusual here.[23] In antiquity, it was taken as simply Empedocles' idiosyncratic terminology for soul (e.g. 'δαίμονας' τὰς ψυχὰς λέγων 'μακραίωνας', Hippol. *Haer.* 7.29.14),[24] and this remains a plausible interpretation.[25] The word, however, has also been taken in its normal meaning of 'divine being'.[26] Without attempting to decide the question here, it is clear that the daimon, whatever it may be, goes through a series of reincarnations (φυομένους παντοῖα διὰ χρόνου εἴδεα θνητῶν, 'born

[22] See note on text above.

[23] He also uses the term in DK31B59, αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κατὰ μείζον ἐμίσγετο δαίμονι δαίμων, 'but when daimon further mingled with daimon'.

[24] Cf. also Inwood 2009: 80-1 on Diogenes of Oenanda.

[25] Argued for by Megino Rodríguez 2011b: 269-73.

[26] Wright 1995 *ad loc*, Primavesi 2008: 261-2 ('an Olympian god in exile'); see Chapter Six below.

throughout the time as all kinds of mortal forms'). It is therefore a theory of metempsychosis in some form.

Pindar does not normally give any indication of a belief in metempsychosis,[27] but there are two exceptions.[28] The clearest occurs in the Second Olympian, significantly written for Theron, tyrant of Acragas, home town of Empedocles, who would have been a youth at the time of its writing. In the section of the ode that would normally be devoted to myth he gives a distinctive picture of the afterlife: 'the hapless souls of those who have died here immediately pay the penalty, and one under earth judges the crimes in that realm of Zeus' (θανόντων μὲν ἐνθάδ᾽ αὐτίκ᾽ ἀπάλαμνοι φρένες ποινὰς ἔτεισαν, τὰ δ᾽ ἐν τᾷδε Διὸς ἀρχᾷ ἀλιτρὰ κατὰ γᾶς δικάζει τις, *Ol.* 2.57-9 = *OF*445). The good have a life there free from toil (ἀπονέστερον ἐσλοὶ δέκονται βίοτον, 62-3), while the others have toil hateful to see (67). 'Those who have endured staying three times on either side to hold their soul wholly from injustice' (ὅσοι δ᾽ ἐτόλμασαν ἑστρὶς ἑκατέρωθι μείναντες ἀπὸ πάμπαν ἀδίκων ἔχειν ψυχάν, 68-70), follow the road of Zeus to the tower of Kronos on the Isles of the Blessed, where they will find heroes like Peleus, Cadmus and Achilles (70-84). I shall examine in the following sections some of the questions of interpretation that this passage raises, but it is clear that those who avoid wrongdoing three times on either side are undergoing reincarnation.

The second passage is a fragment of a threnos:

> ὅισι δὲ Φερσεφόνα ποινὰν παλαιοῦ πένθεος
> δέξεται, εἰς τὸν ὕπερθεν ἅλιον κείνων ἐνάτῳ ἔτεϊ
> ἀνδιδοῖ ψυχὰς πάλιν,
> ἐκ τᾶν βασιλῆες ἀγαυοὶ

[27] Willcock 1995: 139-40.

[28] Long 1948: 29-44, Demand 1975: 353-4, Kirkwood 1982, Lloyd-Jones 1985, Willcock 1995, Holzhausen 2004.

> καὶ σθένει κραιπνοὶ σοφίᾳ τε μέγιστοι
> ἄνδρες αὔξοντ᾽: ἐς δὲ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον ἥρωες ἁγνοὶ
> πρὸς ἀνθρώπων καλεῦνται.
>
> (fr. 133 = *OF*443)
>
> Those from whom Persephone will receive the recompense of ancient grief, in the ninth year she gives back to the sun above; from these arise illustrious kings and men swift in strength and great in wisdom, and in the time to come they are called by men pure heroes.

As we shall see, the interpretation of this passage is much debated,[29] but if Persephone is returning the persons concerned to the sunlight to become kings and so forth, they must be being reincarnated; we can compare the passage of Empedocles referred to above where souls 'come among men on earth as prophets and poets and doctors and leaders' (μάντεις τε καὶ ὑμνόπολοι καὶ ἰητροὶ καὶ πρόμοι ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπιχθονίοισι πέλονται, DK31B146).

In the second book of Herodotus, in which he describes the manners and customs of the Egyptians, we read the following:[30]

> πρῶτοι δὲ καὶ τόνδε τὸν λόγον Αἰγύπτιοι εἰσὶ οἱ εἰπόντες, ὡς ἀνθρώπου ψυχὴ ἀθάνατος ἐστί, τοῦ σώματος δὲ καταφθίνοντος ἐς ἄλλο ζῷον αἰεὶ γινόμενον ἐσδύεται, ἐπεὰν δὲ πάντα περιέλθῃ τὰ χερσαῖα καὶ τὰ θαλάσσια καὶ τὰ πετεινά, αὖτις ἐς ἀνθρώπου σῶμα γινόμενον ἐσδύνει: τὴν περιήλυσιν δὲ αὐτῇ γίνεσθαι ἐν τρισχιλίοισι ἔτεσι. τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ εἰσὶ οἳ Ἑλλήνων ἐχρήσαντο, οἳ μὲν πρότερον οἳ δὲ ὕστερον, ὡς ἰδίῳ ἐωυτῶν ἐόντι: τῶν ἐγὼ εἰδὼς τὰ οὐνόματα οὐ γράφω.
>
> (Hdt. 2.123 = *OF*423)
>
> The Egyptians were the first who maintained the following doctrine, too, that the human soul is immortal, and at the death of the body enters into some

[29] Section 7 below. Sandin 2008: 8 claims it is not by Pindar, but Hellenistic, but provides no evidence for this suggestion.

[30] Long 1948: 21-5, Burkert 1972: 126, Obeyesekere 2002;193-4, Bernabé 2011: 192-3, Bernabé 2013b: 129-30.

> other living thing then coming to birth; and when it has passed through all creatures of land, sea, and air, it enters once more into a human body at birth, a revolution which it completes in three thousand years. There are Greeks who have used this doctrine, some earlier and some later, as if it were their own; I know their names, but do not record them.

As I noted above, there is in fact no evidence for this belief in Egypt, so Herodotus was wrongly attributing to them something held by the Greeks. We have no clue as to which Greeks these might be,[31] though modern scholars have speculated that they might be groups they believe to have existed at the time called Orphics[32] or Pythagoreans.[33]

There is also a plausible reference to reincarnation in a fourth-century BC gold leaf from Thurii (A1), which speaks of leaving a 'circle of heavy grief'. I shall look at this in more detail below.[34]

I should briefly consider the suggestion of Bartoš that a version of metempsychosis, stemming from Orphic and Pythagorean sources, can be found in the Hippocratic corpus, in the late fifth or early fourth century treatise Περὶ διαίτης (*De victu, On regimen*).[35] He relies on the statement that 'from the dead come nourishment, growth and seed; these to enter the body pure signifies health' (ἀπὸ γὰρ τῶν ἀποθανόντων αἱ τροφαὶ καὶ αὐξήσεις καὶ σπέρματα γίνεται· ταῦτα δὲ καθαρὰ ἐσέρπειν ἐς τὸ σῶμα ὑγιείην σημαίνει, *Vict.* 4.92), arguing that the seeds are what the author also calls soul (ψυχή).

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[31] Sandin 2008 provides a useful survey of the cases where Herodotus suppresses information for religious reasons, though his ascription of them all to a death taboo is not altogether convincing.

[32] Bernabé 2011: 192-3; see Chapter Two section 6 above.

[33] Long 1948: 21-5.

[34] Section 5.

[35] Bartoš 2015: 212-17.

The author elsewhere defines ψυχή as a physical concept not dissimilar to sperm, 'a mixture of fire and water, parts of the human body' (ἐσέρπει δὲ ἐς ἄνθρωπον ψυχή· πυρὸς καὶ ὕδατος ξύγκρησιν ἔχουσα, μοῖραν σώματος ἀνθρώπου, *Vict.* 1.7).

This should, however, be seen in the context of his general view of the physical world. He believes that 'everything human and divine proceeds up and down by exchange' (χωρεῖ δὲ πάντα καὶ θεῖα καὶ ἀνθρώπινα ἄνω καὶ κάτω ἀμειβόμενα, *De vict.* 1.5), so that there is either 'light for Zeus, darkness for Hades'or 'light for Hades, darkness for Zeus' (φάος Ζηνὶ, σκότος Ἅιδῃ, φάος Ἅιδῃ, σκότος Ζηνὶ, *De vict.* 1.5); 'those come here, these go there, mixing with each other, fulfilling their allotted fate, both to the greater and to the less' (φοιτεόντων δ' ἐκείνων ὧδε, τῶν δέ τε κεῖσε, συμμισγομένων πρὸς ἄλληλα, τὴν πεπρωμένην μοίρην ἕκαστον ἐκπληροῖ, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ μέζον καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ μεῖον, *De vict.* 1.5). He is therefore saying that nothing is created or destroyed, but only recombines, and in this sense life comes from what has died. The connection with the kind of metempsychosis we have been considering above seems tenuous.

This is all the evidence of any substance for this period. Other examples that have sometimes been put forward are not convincing. The late Byzantine *Suda* (*s.v.* Φερεκύδης) attributes the doctrine to Pherecydes, but this is likely to be due to the tradition that he was the teacher of Pythagoras; Cicero, citing Pherecydes on the immortality of the soul, does not mention it (*Tusc.* 1.16.38).[36] The Olbia bone tablets (*OF*463), with their cryptic mention of 'life death life' (βίος θάνατος βίος) have sometimes been considered as a reference to metempsychosis, but they are more usually taken to relate to a new life in

[36] Long 1948: 13-14, Bernabé 2013b: 127, Santamaría 2011: 235-9.

the other world after death,[37] and, as I argued above,[38] need to be assessed in the context of the other pairs of opposites in the tablet. A new life after death is also the explanation of the statement in the gold leaves, 'now you have died and now you have been reborn ... on this very day' (νῦν ἔθανες καὶ νῦν ἐγένου ... ἄματι τῶιδε, D1-2).[39] Finally, the ascription of metempsychosis to a supposed group of Orphics[40] rests on the evidence of the Neoplatonists of the fifth and sixth century AD (e.g. Procl. *In Remp.* 2.338.10-339.9 = *OF*338).[41]

We have now established the evidence base for the subsequent discussion. Apart from Plato, to be considered later,[42] we have six attested cases of belief in metempsychosis in the classical period: Pythagoras, Parmenides, Empedocles, Pindar, the supposed Egyptians of Herodotus and the Thurii gold leaf. Even for these, the evidence is limited, fragmentary and not always easy to interpret. I shall now proceed to discuss some particular topics it raises, and consider how it relates to other concepts of the afterlife.

[37] Bernabé 2007a: 177-8, Graf 2011: 56, Edmonds 2013b: 289, Betegh 2014: 156-7.

[38] Chapter Three section 3.

[39] Betegh 2014: 157.

[40] Argued most fully by Bernabé 2011: 181-4, Bernabé 2013b: 130-2. For a range of views, see Rohde 1925: 341-5, Long 1948: 89-92, Dodds 1951: 149, Burkert 1972: 126.

[41] There may be a reference to Orphic metempsychosis in Diogenes of Oenanda in the second century AD (fr. 40 Smith = *OF*427), where, however, Ὀρφεῖ]ǫι is Smith's conjecture. Plutarch (*De esu carn.* 996c = *OF*318), without actually mentioning Orphics, associates the characteristically Orphic myth of the dismemberment of Dionysus with rebirth (παλιγγενεσίαν).

[42] Section 4 below.

3: Varieties of metempsychosis

It is clear that we are not dealing with a unified and consistent doctrine, and that there were multiple models of reincarnation circulating in Greece at this time.[43] I shall try to indicate some of the variations, in particular those concerned with transmigration into animals and plants, whether there was a prescribed cycle through a hierarchy of creatures, the time periods involved, and whether metempsychosis was combined with the traditional Hades.

One reasonably consistent element is that souls could transmigrate into animals as well as into humans. This is implicit in our earliest evidence, the epigram of Xenophanes (*Anth. Pal.* 7.120), where Pythagoras is supposed to have recognised the soul of a friend in a dog; Theophrastus says Pythagoras believed animals to have the same soul as humans (τὴν ψυχὴν τὴν αὐτὴν, Porph. *Abst.* 3.26). Empedocles speaks of 'being born as all kinds of mortal forms' (φυομένους παντοῖα ... εἴδεα θνητῶν, DK31B115 = *OF*449), and mentions birds, fish and lions as examples.[44] According to the doctrine ascribed by Herodotus to the Egyptians, the soul passes through all creatures of land, sea and air (πάντα περιέλθῃ τὰ χερσαῖα καὶ τὰ θαλάσσια καὶ τὰ πετεινά, Hdt. 2.123 = *OF*423) before returning to a human body. Transmigration into animals was incorporated by Plato in his various myths of metempsychosis (*Phd.* 81a-82b, *Phdr.* 248d = *OF*459, 249b, *Resp.* 618a, 620d, *Ti.* 42b-d).

[43] Burkert 1972: 133-5, Obeyeskere 2002: 197.

[44] DK31B117, DK31B127.

There were, however, some difficulties. Empedocles seems to have taken the logical step of advocating strict vegetarianism, rejecting the 'cruel deeds of flesh-eating' (σχέτλι' ἔργα βορᾶς, DK31B139 = *OF*637) and comparing the eating of meat at sacrifice with fathers eating sons and sons fathers (φίλας κατὰ σάρκας ἔδουσιν, DK31B137 = *OF*640). The testimonies for Pythagoras range from normal meat eating to complete vegetarianism.[45] There is also a suggestion that he solved the problem by supposing that human souls only entered into animals that were not sacrificed (Iambl. *VP* 85). From a different point of view, Plato saw a problem with an irrational animal soul becoming human, and had to stipulate that souls could only pass from animals to humans if they had been humans originally, (*Phdr.* 249b). This was such a difficulty for the later Platonists[46] that some. like Porphyry (August. *De civ. D.* 10.30, 13.19), rejected human reincarnation as animals altogether.

Empedocles, however, went one step further, and extended reincarnation to plants: souls of sufficient stature are born as laurels among trees (δάφναι δ' ἐνὶ δένδρεσιν ὠυκόμοισιν, DK31B127), and he himself was once a bush (θάμνος, DK31B117 = *OF*451). This view was also ascribed to Pythagoras by Heraclides (φυτὰ καὶ ζῷα, D.L. 8.1.4) and by a scholion to the Iliad (γεννωμένῳ σώματι ἢ φυτῷ, schol. T *Il.* 16.857), but otherwise seems peculiar to Empedocles.[47] It is not clear why in this case he should not forbid the eating of plant food as well as animals.[48]

[45] Betegh 2014: 155-6.

[46] Rohde 1925: 483n40.

[47] Burkert 1972: 133n74.

[48] Edmonds 2013b: 284n134. He does forbid the use of laurels, one of the plants he specifically mentions (δάφνης [τῶν] φύλλων ἅπο πάμπαν ἔχεσθαι, DK31B140), but it seems unlikely that he meant reincarnation to be confined to this one plant alone.

It should also be noted that Pindar gives no indication of rebirth as an animal: the soul has just to keep free of wrongdoing three times on either side (*Ol.* 2.68-70 = *OF*445), and may be reborn as some kind of eminent man in the ninth year (fr. 133 = *OF*443). This may possibly be a function of the genre in which he was working, alluding to the belief rather than setting out a comprehensive theory, but it does suggest that there may not have been general agreement as to what kind of being was subject to the laws of metempsychosis.

A further question is whether reincarnation is purely random, or whether there was some kind of cycle through the various forms of being. According to Aristotle, it was possible, in the Pythagorean stories (μύθους) for 'any soul to clothe itself in any body' (τὴν τυχοῦσαν ψυχὴν εἰς τὸ τυχὸν ἐνδύεσθαι σῶμα, *De an.* 407b). So too, a later scholiast ascribes to Pythagoras the view that 'the retiring soul is born in whatever body or plant it might encounter' (Πυθαγόρας φησίν, ὡς ἀναχωροῦσα ἡ ψυχὴ ἐν ἐκείνῳ γίνεται [ἐν] ᾧ ἂν γεννωμένῳ σώματι ἢ φυτῷ καταντήσῃ, schol. T *Il.* 16.857).

On the other hand, in Herodotus the soul 'when it has passed through all creatures of land, sea, and air, enters once more into a human body at birth' (ἐπεὰν δὲ πάντα περιέλθῃ τὰ χερσαῖα καὶ τὰ θαλάσσια καὶ τὰ πετεινά, αὖτις ἐς ἀνθρώπου σῶμα γινόμενον ἐσδύνει, Hdt. 2.123 = *OF*423), a process he describes as a cycle or revolution (περιήλυσιν). This sounds like a deliberate progression, not something that is random. Empedocles (DK31B115 = *OF*449) speaks of being born in all kinds of mortal forms (παντοῖα ... εἴδεα θνητῶν), passing from air to sea to earth to sun to air again; these categories of course correspond to Empedocles' four elements,[49] and may be just illustrating all the possibilities, but there is probably also the suggestion of a requirement to experience all forms of life. Pythagoras himself, in a similar way, was

[49] Wright 1995 *ad loc.*

sometimes said to hold that 'the soul exchanging in a cycle of necessity is bound now in this, now in that creature' (τὴν ψυχὴν κύκλον ἀνάγκης ἀμείβουσαν ἄλλοτ' ἄλλοις ἐνδεῖσθαι ζῴοις, D.L. 8.1.14).

A gradation in the forms of human reincarnation is also possible. Empedocles says:

> εἰς δὲ τέλος μάντεις τε καὶ ὑμνόπολοι καὶ ἰητροί καὶ πρόμοι ἀνθρώποισιν
> ἐπιχθονίοισι πελονται· ἔνθεν ἀναβλαστοῦσι θεοὶ τιμῇσι φέριστοι.
> (DK31B146)
>
> And at the end they come among men on earth as prophets and poets and doctors and leaders, and from these they shoot up as gods, highest in honour.

Even if this applies only to the select few, it is clearly a directed rather than random selection.[50] Similarly in Pindar we find an analogous group:

> ἐκ τᾶν βασιλῆες ἀγαυοὶ
> καὶ σθένει κραιπνοὶ σοφίᾳ τε μέγιστοι
> ἄνδρες αὔξοντ᾽: ἐς δὲ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον ἥρωες ἁγνοὶ
> πρὸς ἀνθρώπων καλεῦνται.
> (fr. 133 = *OF*443)
>
> From these arise illustrious kings and men swift in strength and great in wisdom, and in the time to come they are called by men pure heroes.

It seems, therefore, that even excluding Plato, whose idiosyncratic treatment will be considered below,[51] there are clearly significant differences of opinion as to whether reincarnation has to progress through all kinds of creatures, singles out different categories of human, or is entirely random.

There is also no kind of agreement on how long this process of successive reincarnation might last. According to a tradition preserved in the anonymous

[50] Probably the same group become laurels among trees and lions among animals (DK31B127).

[51] Section 4.

numerological work ascribed to Iamblichus, and perhaps going back to the fourth century BC musicologist Aristoxenus (Aristox. fr. 12 = [Iambl.] *Theol. Ar.* 40 p. 52, 8 de Falco),[52] the successive transmigrations (μετεμπψυχώσεις) of Pythagoras took place at intervals of 216 years, this being the cube of six. In Pindar's Second Olympian, the soul that is to succeed in reaching the Isles of the Blessed must avoid wrongdoing three times on either side (ἑστρὶς ἑκατέρωθι, *Ol.* 2.68-9 = *OF*445); the meaning has been much disputed,[53] but most plausibly refers to three successive reincarnations. In the same poet's fragment 133 (*OF*443), on the other hand, only one reincarnation is mentioned, to take place in the ninth year (ἐνάτῳ ἔτει).[54]

The daimon of Empedocles wanders from the blessed ones being continually reborn for three myriad seasons (τρίς ... μυρίας ὥρας, DK31B115 = *OF*449). This is literally thirty thousand seasons (ὥρα may mean years or parts of years, *LSJ s.v.* ὥρα) but we might suspect that this is just a way of indicating a large number, as we might say 'thousands and thousands of years'.[55] The Egyptians of Herodotus are said by him to believe the soul completes a revolution (περιήλυσιν) through all types of creature back to human again in three thousand years (Hdt. 2.123 = *OF*423).

If we are looking for a common element in all these, the only one I can find is that they all involve some multiple of the number three, though I do not know what the significance of this might be.[56] Plato varies it a little: in the *Phaedrus*

[52] Huffman 2014: 288.

[53] Long 1948: 35, Fritz 1957: 86, McGibbon 1964, Kirkwood 1982: 73.

[54] For the interpretation of this passage, see section 7 below.

[55] Wright 1995 *ad loc.*

[56] Catenacci 2014-15: 25 suggests that the number is frequent in 'Orphic-Pythagorean' beliefs, and also in Pindar's *Second Olympian*.

it is three periods of a thousand years for the privileged philosopher (249a) but for the others a myriad of years (ἐτῶν μυρίων, 248e = *OF*459), again perhaps 'thousands of years' rather than exactly ten thousand. The *Republic* refers to tenfold penances of hundred-year units, thus lasting a thousand years (615a-b).[57]

A related question is whether the process of metempsychosis is supposed to take place directly from body to body, doing away with the need for the traditional underworld, or whether Hades still has a role, perhaps as a resting place between reincarnations.[58] The evidence for Pythagoras is again confused. One source seems to imply a direct process: 'the retiring soul is born in whatever body or plant it might encounter' (ἀναχωροῦσα ἡ ψυχὴ ἐν ἐκείνῳ γίνεται [ἐν] ᾧ ἂν γεννωμένῳ σώματι ἢ φυτῷ καταντήσῃ, schol. T *Il.* 16.857). References to Hades in connection with Pythagoras are rather more frequent, as in Heraclides Ponticus ('all the soul experienced in Hades', ὅσα ἡ ψυχὴ ἐν Ἅιδῃ ἔπαθε, D.L. 8.1.4), allusions to earthquakes being caused by the assembly of the dead, who must therefore be below the earth (Ael. *V.H.* 4.17) and to 'those in Tartarus' (τοῖς ἐν τῷ ταρτάρῳ, Arist. *An. Post.* 94b33) and the story, probably however not appearing before the third century BC, of the katabasis of Pythagoras to Hades.[59] The 216-year gap of Aristoxenus (fr. 12) between reincarnations must imply some time elsewhere, presumably in Hades. It is, however, difficult to know how much of this is later elaboration of the Pythagoras legend.

[57] Compare the thousand-year period before reincarnation given by Virgil in the Aeneid: *ubi mille rotam volvere per annos* (6.748).

[58] Burkert 1972: 134.

[59] Zhmud 2012: 216.

There is, however, no mention of either Hades or any gap between successive reincarnations in either Herodotus or Empedocles. It is true that Empedocles does make gnomic allusions to weeping and wailing on coming to an unfamiliar place (κλαυσά τε καὶ κώκυσα ἰδὼν ἀσυνήθεα χῶρον, DK31B118 = *OF*452), to a joyless place (ἀτερπέα χῶρον, DK31B121), and to coming under a roofed cave (ἄντρον ὑπόστεγον, DK31B120), which have sometimes been interpreted as referring to Hades.[60] There is nothing specific, however, to sustain the identification, and they can more plausibly be taken as meaning this world under the rule of Strife.

Pindar, on the other hand, in the Second Olympian, concentrates on his picture of the afterlife, referring to metempsychosis only briefly (*Ol.* 2.56-83 = *OF*445). Although his focus is on the Isles of the Blessed, whose flowers and ocean breezes (ὠκεανίδες αὖραι, *Ol.* 2.71-2) sound as if they are above ground, the judge under the earth (ἀλιτρὰ κατὰ γᾶς, *Ol.* 2.59) must be in the traditional Hades. In fragment 133 (*OF*443), too, Persephone restores the souls to the sun above in the ninth year (εἰς τὸν ὕπερθεν ἅλιον κείνων ἐνάτῳ ἔτεϊ ἀνδιδοῖ ψυχὰς πάλιν), implying that until then they remained in Persephone's realm of Hades. Parmenides, also, sending the souls back and forth between the visible and the invisible (ἐκ τοῦ ἐμφανοῦς εἰς τὸ ἀειδές, DK28adB13), implies a stay in some invisible realm of the dead. Plato, as we shall see,[61] combines Hades and metempsychosis in his presentations.

We can therefore conclude that even in the few sources available to us there is no kind of consistency in such matters as reincarnation in plants, whether the process is a random one, the length of time involved and whether

[60] For some contributions to the debate, see Rohde 1925: 381, Long 1948: 59-61, Dodds 1951: 174n114, Zuntz 1971: 255, Wright 1995 *ad locc.*

[61] Section 4 below.

metempsychosis can be combined with the traditional Hades. It seems we cannot be dealing with a unified doctrine, or even with an initially unified doctrine that has developed variant forms, but more likely with a simple idea that has been taken up separately by different people and elaborated by them each in their own idiosyncratic way.

4: Plato, metempsychosis and justice

I have postponed the consideration of Plato's portrayals of metempsychosis until now, although it constitutes a substantial portion of the evidence from the classical period, as I believe they are in many ways a special case, and I thought it preferable first to review the pre-Platonic data on its own merits rather than run the danger of retrojecting Plato's conceptions on to it. I shall try to show that these latter are essentially inventions to support his argument, and are linked to his desire to demonstrate that there is justice in the afterlife.

I first want to outline briefly the idea that human beings are judged in the afterlife, and specifically that wrongdoers are punished.[62] In Homer, we learn only of punishment for three mythological figures, Tityus, Tantalus and Sisyphus (*Od.* 11.576-600), condemned for what were later identified as crimes against the gods[63] to picturesque fates (liver eaten by vultures, food and drink snatched away, perpetually rolling a stone uphill); there is no suggestion of a general judgment of souls.[64] Other similar figures, such as Ixion and his wheel, were later added.[65]

There is a suggestion of a more general conception of post-mortem punishment in the *Homeric hymn to Demeter*, where Hades states that wrongdoers will receive eternal punishment (τῶν δ' ἀδικησάντων τίσις

[62] There are short accounts in Rohde 1925: 238-40 and Edmonds 2013b: 257-9.

[63] Heubeck 1989 *ad loc*, Burkert 2009: 152-5.

[64] Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 67-9.

[65] Rohde 1925: 246n11.

ἔσσεται ἤματα πάντα, 367), though the wrongdoers then seem to be equated with those who fail to sacrifice to Persephone (οἵ κεν μὴ θυσίαισι τεὸν μένος ἱλάσκωνται, 368). Possibly the meaning is that sacrifice to Persephone, referring here to initiation at Eleusis, enables the wrongdoers to escape the punishment they would otherwise deserve.[66]

There is certainly a more general conception in Aeschylus: 'there, the story goes, another Zeus makes a last judgment on their faults among the dead' (κἀκεῖ δικάζει τἀπλακήμαθ', ὡς λόγος, Ζεὺς ἄλλος ἐν καμοῦσαν ὑστάτας δίκας, *Supp.* 230-1), 'for Hades is mighty in holding mortals to account under the earth' (μέγας γὰρ Ἅιδης ἐστὶν εὔθυνος βροτῶν ἔνερθε χθονός, *Eum.* 273-4). Polygnotus at Delphi depicted the punishment in Hades of those who wronged their fathers and committed sacrilege (Paus. 10.28.5).[67] In Aristophanes, those who have committed a list of offences including perjury and assaulting their parents, as well as more comical and bathetic ones, are condemned to lie in dung (*Ran.* 145-51).

Demosthenes, too, describes an opponent as 'one not likely to find the gods in Hades propitious, but to be thrust out among the impious because of the wickedness of his life' (εἶθ' ὃν οὐδὲ τῶν ἐν Ἅιδου θεῶν εἰκός ἐστιν τυχεῖν ἵλεων, ἀλλ' εἰς τοὺς ἀσεβεῖς ὠσθῆναι διὰ τὴν πονηρίαν τοῦ βίου, Dem. 25.53). Plato represents the old man who used to laugh at 'the stories told of those in Hades, that those who have done wrong here must be punished there' (οἵ τε γὰρ λεγόμενοι μῦθοι περὶ τῶν ἐν Ἅιδου, ὡς τὸν ἐνθάδε ἀδικήσαντα δεῖ ἐκεῖ διδόναι δίκην, *Resp.* 330d-e), as giving them more credence as death approaches.

[66] Discussion in Richardson 1974 *ad loc.*

[67] Edmonds 2015: 557-8.

This belief in justice in the afterlife is sometimes used as a criticism of the Eleusinian mysteries, which require only initiation, not virtue, for a better fate after death, as in the saying ascribed to the Cynic Diogenes:

> ἀξιούντων Ἀθηναίων μυηθῆναι αὐτὸν καὶ λεγόντων ὡς ἐν ᾅδου προεδρίας οἱ μεμυημένοι τυγχάνουσι, ‘γελοῖον,’ ἔφη, ‘εἰ Ἀγησίλαος μὲν καὶ Ἐπαμεινώνδας ἐν τῷ βορβόρῳ διάξουσιν, εὐτελεῖς δέ τινες μεμυημένοι ἐν ταῖς μακάρων νήσοις ἔσονται.’
>
> (D.L. 6.2.39 = *OF*435)

> When the Athenians urged him to become initiated, saying that those who have been initiated have a privileged place in Hades, he said ‘It would be ludicrous if Agesilaus and Epaminondas are to live in the mud, while worthless people who have been initiated will be in the Isles of the Blessed.’[68]

If the idea of a judgment after death is difficult to link with initiation, it is also not at first sight easy to combine with metempsychosis. Empedocles does say the transmigration process is started by an error (ἀμπλακίῃσι, DK31B115 = *OF*449) of the daimon, but this seems bound up with his doctrine of the alternation of Love and Strife, his error being to trust in raving Strife (νείκει μαινομένῳ πίσυνος). Otherwise, we have only yet seen the combination in Pindar. I shall discuss the ποινή paid to Persephone in fragment 133 below,[69] but in *Olympian* 2 ‘the hapless souls of those who have died here immediately pay the penalty, and one under earth judges the crimes in that realm of Zeus’ (θανόντων μὲν ἐνθάδ᾽ αὐτίκ᾽ ἀπάλαμνοι φρένες ποινὰς ἔτισαν, τὰ δ᾽ ἐν τᾷδε Διὸς ἀρχᾷ ἀλιτρὰ κατὰ γᾶς δικάζει τις, *Ol.* 2.57-9 = *OF*:445).[70] They have intolerable toil, while those who have kept themselves from wrongdoing for

[68] Other versions: Plutarch *Adolescens* 21f, Julian *Or.* 7.25 238a; Rohde 1925: 239. Mylonas’ claim (Mylonas 1961: 266n74) that the reference is to Orphics, not Eleusis, is refuted by Graf 1974: 81n34. Plato makes a similar point in the *Republic* (363a-366b) in connection with private initiators.

[69] Section 7.

[70] See Long 1948: 32-4 for various interpretations of this passage in the scholia.

three reincarnations go on to the tower of Kronos and the Isles of the Blessed.[71] What is envisaged is not entirely clear from Pindar's words, but most likely people have three attempts at living a virtuous life; if they fail in any of them they go no further, but are condemned to endless toil in Hades, while only the successful ones go on to further lives and then to permanent felicity.

In Plato's versions of metempsychosis, however, justice becomes a major theme. I have already considered Plato's myths of the soul as evidence for contemporary views of the afterlife,[72] and I shall briefly recapitulate here the chief results of that investigation. I identified thirteen relevant passages setting out or alluding to myths of the soul and afterlife; these myths were mutually incompatible in many respects. They were employed in passing to support Plato's arguments in the dialogue in question, specifically his arguments in favour of the immortality of the soul and the value of living a virtuous, and especially a philosophical, life. I concluded that they were basically *ad hoc* inventions by Plato, which however drew on a common stock of ideas familiar to himself and his audience. Although the details were his own invention, with anything especially adapted to his argument particularly suspect, the root idea and perhaps some of the details irrelevant to or conflicting with the case he is making are likely to reflect beliefs current at the time.

A number of these myths have no reference to metempsychosis. These include *Gorgias* 492e-493c (*OF*434) (the uninitiated in Hades carrying water in a sieve), *Gorgias* 522e-527a (*OF*460) (Minos, Rhadamanthus and Aeacus as

[71] Kirkwood 1982: 71 observes that this is the first passage to link reward after death to justice and moral excellence.

[72] Chapter Two section 4 above. In addition to the works cited there, see Long 1948: 63-86 for specific consideration of Plato and metempsychosis.

judges of the dead), *Phaedo* 63b-c (Socrates will join the company of good men and gods after death), *Phaedo* 69c-d (*OF*434) (the initiated will live with the gods after death, while the uninitiated will lie in mud), and *Phaedo* 107d-108c, 113d-114c (souls will be assigned to Tartarus, abodes of bliss or intermediate places according to their good or bad actions in life). I shall consider *Phaedo* 62b (life as a kind of prison or guard-post) below.[73]

This still, however, leaves us with seven cases to examine. In the *Meno* (81a-c = *OF*424) he gives unidentified men and women, priests and priestesses wise in divine matters (ἀνδρῶν τε καὶ γυναικῶν σοφῶν περὶ τὰ θεῖα πράγματα) as his authority for saying the soul is immortal, at one time dying and at another being born again (τοτὲ μὲν τελευτᾶν ... τοτὲ δὲ πάλιν γίνεσθαι). Consequently, Socrates concludes, one should live as holy a life as possible (ὡς ὁσιώτατα διαβιῶναι τὸν βίον). After citing the passage of Pindar to be discussed below,[74] he adds an argument for Platonic anamnesis, in that the experience of many lives allows the soul to recollect what it learnt about virtue and such like (περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ περὶ ἄλλων οἷον τ' εἶναι αὐτὴν ἀναμνησθῆναι). Here then we have the simple possibility of metempsychosis, without any details as to the process of its operation, being used as a reinforcement for standard Platonic arguments.

At *Phaedo* 70c (*OF*428), an old story (παλαιὸς μὲν οὖν ἔστι τις λόγος) that souls return here and are born from the dead (πάλιν γε δεῦρο ἀφικνοῦνται καὶ γίγνονται ἐκ τῶν τεθνεώτων) is mentioned in passing as something which, if it were really true (εἰ τοῦθ' οὕτως ἔχει), would prove the immortality of the soul. This use is therefore analogous to that in the *Meno*. A little later in the same dialogue (80d-82c), Socrates supposes that the souls of those who have been

[73] Section 6.

[74] Section 7.

slaves to their passions pass into the bodies of the appropriate animal, as robbers into wolves and so on, only the more worthy becoming humans and only philosophers coming to live with the gods. Again, the purpose is to reinforce Socrates' argument for a virtuous and philosophical life. The distinctive feature here, reincarnation in the appropriate animal, is presented as speculation by Socrates, using such phrases as 'it is likely' (εἰκός), not as something learned from old stories or the wise, so appears to be an invention by Plato.

The myth of Er in the *Republic* (614b-621b = *OF*461-2, 1037, 1077)[75] is much longer and more elaborate than anything we have examined so far. When the souls after death arrives in some other-worldly region (τόπον τινὰ δαιμόνιον, 614c), judges separate the just from the unjust (δικαίους ... ἀδίκους, 614c), sending the former above, the latter below. The unjust are punished tenfold for their crimes in hundred-year periods (ἑκατονταερίδα, 615a).[76] Both groups then return for reincarnation: 'Souls that live for a day, the beginning of another mortal cycle of death-bearing birth' (ψυχαὶ ἐφήμεροι, ἀρχὴ ἄλλης περιόδου θνητοῦ γένους θανατηφόρου, 617d). They each choose their own type of animal or human life, with those who have experienced punishment and suffering generally choosing more wisely than those who have come from heaven. They are each allotted a daimon to lead them through life (δαίμονα, τοῦτον φύλακα συμπέμπειν τοῦ βίου, 620d-e) and, after drinking from the river of forgetfulness (τὸν Ἀμέλητα ποταμόν, 621a) to forget everything, they are carried up to their birth.

[75] Annas 1981: 344-53, Annas 1982: 129-38, Ferrari 2009.

[76] The total is also said to be a thousand years (χιλιέτη, 615a, 621d); perhaps this is meant as an example or an approximate figure.

This is an interesting combination of metempsychosis with a judgment and punishment after death. There is no hint of an end to the process here; people apparently carry on being alternately reincarnated and judged for ever. A particularly striking feature is that they can not only choose their own new incarnation, but that they often choose wrongly. This indeed seems the key point of the story for Plato:

> ἔνθα δή, ὡς ἔοικεν, ὦ φίλε Γλαύκων, ὁ πᾶς κίνδυνος ἀνθρώπῳ, καὶ διὰ ταῦτα μάλιστα ἐπιμελητέον ὅπως ἕκαστος ἡμῶν τῶν ἄλλων μαθημάτων ἀμελήσας τούτου τοῦ μαθήματος καὶ ζητητὴς καὶ μαθητὴς ἔσται, ἐάν ποθεν οἷός τ᾽ ᾖ μαθεῖν καὶ ἐξευρεῖν τίς αὐτὸν ποιήσει δυνατὸν καὶ ἐπιστήμονα, βίον καὶ χρηστὸν καὶ πονηρὸν διαγιγνώσκοντα,
>
> (618b-c)

> And there, dear Glaucon, it appears, is the supreme hazard for a man, and this is the chief reason why it should be our main concern that each of us, neglecting all other studies, should seek after and study this thing—if in any way he may be able to learn of and discover the man who will give him the ability and the knowledge to distinguish the life that is good from that which is bad.

The two aspects of the myth are therefore both necessary for Plato's message: reincarnation so that they can make their own choice of life, and judgment so that they are rewarded for a good choice. There is no hint of anything like this kind of arrangement in the earlier evidence for metempsychosis; even in Pindar, there is no suggestion of any kind of choice of new life. On the principles of interpretation that I laid out earlier, the myth of Er is so well adapted to the moral Plato is trying to draw that we must consider it an invention of his, a kind of parable which simply uses metempsychosis as the peg on which to hang his story.

The myth in the *Phaedrus* (248c-249b = *OF*459) describes how the originally winged soul loses its wings and passes into one of nine categories of human, ranked from philosopher down to tyrant. At the end of this life they are

judged, and either go to heaven or to a place under the earth to receive their punishment (εἰς τὰ ὑπὸ γῆς δικαιωτήρια ἐλθοῦσαι δίκην ἐκτίνουσιν, 249a). After a thousand years they enter a new life, human or animal, each choosing whatever it wishes (αἵρεσιν τοῦ δευτέρου βίου αἱροῦνται ὃν ἂν θέλη ἑκάστη, 249b). 'Whoever lives justly obtains a better fate, whoever unjustly a worse' (ὃς μὲν ἂν δικαίως διαγάγῃ ἀμείνονος μοίρας μεταλαμβάνει, ὃς δ᾽ ἂν ἀδίκως, χείρονος, 248e). After ten thousand years, or three thousand for a philosopher, they regain their wings and return to their original state. There are obvious parallels with the myth of Er, as metempsychosis and judgment are again combined to encourage us to lead a just life.

The two remaining myths have the same rationale and can be dealt with more briefly. In the *Timaeus* (42b-d, 91a-92c), the souls, originally on the stars, are first incarnated as men. Those who fail to master their passions and live unjustly will be born again as women and animals, but the just will return to their star of origin. In the *Laws* (903b-904d), the soul is assigned now to one body, now to another (ψυχὴ συντεταγμένη σώματι τοτὲ μὲν ἄλλῳ, τοτὲ δὲ ἄλλῳ, 903b), and according to whether it changes in the direction of justice or injustice, it goes towards Hades or towards a higher region; the details here are not worked out.

Some conclusions can now be drawn. In the first place, the details of all these myths are very different: do souls have wings or come from stars, are robbers reborn as wolves and so forth, are they alternately reincarnated and judged, does the process take a thousand years or ten thousand, does it end or continue indefinitely, can the soul choose its own reincarnation? It does not seem plausible that these were all different versions of the metempsychosis doctrine that were current in Plato's time, and that Plato selected a different one for each dialogue. It seems rather that Plato had a fertile and inventive

mind, and produced on each occasion a new elaboration of the same basic idea.

The basic idea in this case was the combination of metempsychosis with judgment after death, and the purpose of all these stories was to encourage his audience to live a good and just life. Whether he actually had any belief in the doctrine of reincarnation must be open to question. The existence in his earlier dialogues of myths of the afterlife not involving metempsychosis, and the use of such phrases as 'if it were really true' (εἰ τοῦθ᾽ οὕτως ἔχει, *Phd.* 70c) might lead us to doubt it, but certainty is impossible. Whether or not he was a believer, he made use of it as a kind of rhetorical device to reinforce his argument.

If, then, the combination of judgment after death and metempsychosis was simply adopted by Plato to support his argument, and if the varying details of how it operated were invented by him, we have to conclude that despite the quantity of evidence on the topic that we have from his works, which is much greater than the total from all his predecessors, as reviewed in the earlier sections of this chapter, he really adds nothing to our knowledge of metempsychosis as a contemporary religious belief. At most, he simply confirms that it existed and that he might have expected his audience to have heard of it. In fact, there is no indication that he knew anything more about it than we do ourselves two thousand years later.

5: Memory and release from the cycle

Two fundamental question for the belief in metempsychosis are: can human beings remember their previous lives? and, are they eventually released from the cycle of reincarnation?

The question of memory highlights a fundamental ambiguity at the heart of the theory. If people are allowed to remember previous lives, why is this not the common experience? And if they cannot, in what sense can the reincarnated soul be said to retain its identity?

Pythagoras does seem to remember his previous incarnations. He was usually said to remember his life as Euphorbus, a minor character in the *Iliad* (Porph. *VP* 26, Iambl. *VP* 63).[77] A full list of his earlier incarnations in addition to Euphorbus seems to have originated with the fourth-century BC writer of Platonic dialogues Heraclides Ponticus (D.L. 8.1.4-5),[78] who may be suspected of inventing them as local colour for his dialogues. If the wise man of Empedocles whose experience covers ten or twenty generations (DK31B129) is Pythagoras, then this would confirm that he had the reputation of remembering his previous lives.[79] Empedocles himself claimed to have previously been boy, girl, bush, bird and fish (DK31B117 = *OF*451), though it is not clear if he is remembering this or simply deducing that he would have been.[80]

[77] For similar reports, see Burkert 1972: 139n108.

[78] Gottschalk 1980: 8-9, 114-17, Dillon 2014: 257-60.

[79] Long 1948: 17-21, Lloyd 2014: 29-30.

[80] Long 1948: 48-50 assumes memory, Wright 1995 *ad loc* prefers deduction.

Pythagoras and Empedocles were, however, by no means ordinary humans. Empedocles called himself an immortal god (θεὸς ἄμβροτος, DK31B112), and Pythagoras, according to Heraclides, had once been the son of Hermes, who granted him the gift of retaining a memory of his experiences through life and death (ζῶντα καὶ τελευτῶντα μνήμην ἔχειν τῶν συμβαινόντων, D.L. 8.1.4). We do not hear of this kind of recollection in other sources.

In some of the gold leaves, we find the soul directed to drink from the spring of Memory and avoid the spring at which other souls are drinking, presumably that of Forgetfulness (B group); they are also prefixed by the statement 'This is the work of Memory' (Μναμοσύνας τόδε ἔργον).[81] I shall discuss this more fully in a later chapter,[82] but I doubt if it is relevant to metempsychosis.[83] The soul who follows the instructions of the gold leaf and drinks the waters of Memory is clearly destined not for reincarnation but for permanent bliss, and it is difficult to see how the act of remembering its previous life would in some way bring this about.

Plato normally ignores the question, but there are two exceptions. In the most fully developed of his reincarnation myths, the story of Er in the *Republic*, after selecting their new lives, the souls proceed to the Plain of Lethe (Λήθης πεδίον, 621a) and drink from the River of Forgetfulness (Ἀμέλητα ποταμόν. 621a), 'and each as they drank forgot everything' (τὸν δὲ ἀεὶ πιόντα πάντων ἐπιλανθάνεσθαι, 621a-b = *OF*462).[84] He adds that 'those not saved by their understanding drank more than the measure' (τοὺς δὲ φρονήσει μὴ

[81] Cf. A5, 'accept this gift of Memory' (δέχεσθε Μνεμοσύνης τόδε δῶρον).

[82] Chapter Seven section 4.

[83] *Contra* Zuntz 1971: 380-1; see also Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 32-3, Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 117-19.

[84] On Lethe, see Rohde 1925: 249-50n21.

σῳζομένους πλέον πίνειν τοῦ μέτρου, 621a), without elaborating on this remark.

It is perhaps, however, explained by his other reference to recollection and metempsychosis, in the *Meno*:

> ἅτε οὖν ἡ ψυχὴ ἀθάνατός τε οὖσα καὶ πολλάκις γεγονυῖα, καὶ ἑωρακυῖα καὶ τὰ ἐνθάδε καὶ τὰ ἐν Ἅιδου καὶ πάντα χρήματα, οὐκ ἔστιν ὅτι οὐ μεμάθηκεν: ὥστε οὐδὲν θαυμαστὸν καὶ περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ περὶ ἄλλων οἷόν τ᾽ εἶναι αὐτὴν ἀναμνησθῆναι, ἅ γε καὶ πρότερον ἠπίστατο.
>
> (*Meno* 81c)

> Seeing then that the soul is immortal and has been born many times, and has seen all things both here and in Hades, there is nothing it has not learnt; so that it is no wonder that it should be able to recollect about virtue and other things, which indeed it knew before.

This is Plato's solution of the problem of memory in metempsychosis, by appealing to his theory of anamnesis.[85] The reincarnated soul does not remember any details of its previous lives, but does retain things like knowledge of virtue or ideas. It is a specifically Platonic solution, designed to reinforce Platonic concepts, and there is no indication that it was grounded in anything he had learned of the belief from others.

The other fundamental question is whether the process of reincarnation goes on indefinitely, or whether there is an eventual release from the process. This is often linked with the idea of reincarnation as a cycle, perhaps reading back from Proclus in the fifth century AD, who reports that the Orphics who perform the rites of Dionysus and Persephone pray to 'end the cycle and rest from evil'

[85] There is a considerable literature on Platonic anamnesis; see e.g. Scott 1987.

(κύκλου τ' ἂν λήξαι καὶ ἀναπεύσαι κακότητος, Procl. *In Ti.* 3.297.3 = *OF*348).[86] Here again, there is no uniformity in the sources.

In fact, there is not a close association between the concept of a κύκλος and release from the cycle of metempsychosis. Diogenes Laertius ascribes the term to Pythagoras: 'they say he was the first to declare the soul undergoes changes in a cycle of necessity, bound at one time to one creature, at another to another' (πρῶτόν τέ φασι τοῦτον ἀποφήναι τὴν ψυχὴν κύκλον ἀνάγκης ἀμείβουσαν ἄλλοτ' ἄλλοις ἐνδεῖσθαι ζῴοις, D.L. 8.1.14). There is, however, no sign that Pythagoras believed that the soul could be released from this circle.[87] Porphyry reports him teaching that there is a different kind of cycle (here using the term περίοδος), in which 'in certain cycles events occur again' (κατὰ περιόδους τινὰς τὰ γενόμενά ποτε πάλιν γίνεται, Porph. *VP* 19 = DK14A8); again, there is no suggestion that people may be released from it. Herodotus (2.123 = *OF*423) refers to a three-thousand-year cycle (this time περιήλυσις) in which the soul passes through all kinds of creatures before returning to a human body, but the process apparently continues indefinitely.

The strongest case for a link between κύκλος and release from the cycle of reincarnation is in this fourth century BC gold leaf from Thurii:

> ἔρχομαι ἐκ κοθαρῶν, κοθαρὰ χθονίων βασίλεια,
> Εὐκλῆς, Εὐβουλεύς τε καὶ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι·
> καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ὑμῶν γένος ὄλβιον εὔχομαι εἶμεν,
> ἀλλά με Μοῖρα ἐδάμασσε καὶ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι καὶ ἀστεροβλῆτα κεραυνόν.
> κύκλου δ' ἐξέπταν βαρυπενθέος ἀργαλέοιο,
> ἱμερτοῦ δ' ἐπέβαν στεφάνου ποσὶ καρπαλίμοισι,
> Δεσποίνας δὲ ὑπὸ κόλπον ἔδυν χθονίας βασιλείας·

[86] Zuntz 1971: 320-2, Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 117-21, Bernabé 2013b: 136.

[87] Zhmud 2012: 232.

> ἱμερτοῦ δ’ ἀπέβαν στεφάνου ποσὶ καρπαλίμοισι.
> ‘ὄλβιε καὶ μακαριστέ, θεὸς δ’ ἔσηι ἀντὶ βροτοῖο’.
> ἔριφος ἐς γάλ’ ἔπετον.
>
> (A1)
>
> I come pure from the pure, queen of the underworld, Eukles, Eubouleus and the other immortal gods, and I claim that I am of your blessed race, but Fate subdued me and the other immortal gods and the star-flung thunderbolt. I have flown out of the hard cycle of heavy grief. I have approached on swift feet the desired crown. I have sunk beneath the bosom of the Lady, queen of the underworld. I have approached on swift feet the desired crown. ‘Fortunate and blessed, you will be a god instead of a mortal.’ A kid I fell into milk.[88]

The soul after death is appealing to the chthonic powers for a good fate in the afterlife, desired, fortunate and blessed, after which it will no longer be mortal. The ‘hard circle of heavy grief’ (κύκλου ... βαρυπενθέος ἀργαλέοιο) which it has flown out of must therefore be the human life or lives it has left behind. The question is therefore whether more than one life must be meant. κύκλος is also used by various authors to refer to the vicissitudes of life without any reference to reincarnation, as in ‘human affairs form a cycle’ (κύκλον εἶναι τὰ ἀνθρώπινα πράγματα, Arist. *Phys.* 223b).[89] We have, however, just seen it linked with metempsychosis in Herodotus and the Pythagorean sources, and the emphasis on the grief and harshness of the cycle suggests something more than the ups and downs of life. I shall suggest below[90] that there are similarities in vocabulary with other possible references to reincarnation. The ‘desired crown’ would then indeed be a release from the cycle.[91]

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[88] For commentary, see Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 100-32.

[89] Edmonds 2004: 96-7, Edmonds 2013b: 289-90.

[90] Section 7.

[91] If the phrase in another fourth-century leaf from Thurii, ‘hail, having experienced the experience you have not experienced before’ (χαῖρε παθών τὸ πάθημα τὸ δ’ οὔπω πρόσθ’{ε} ἐπεπόνθεις, A4.3) is taken, as seems most natural, as referring to death, this would obviously not be compatible with repeated lives and be another instance of variation

Pindar also envisages a final release from reincarnation. In the Second Olympian (*OF*445), the Isles of the Blessed are clearly the ultimate resting place of those who have avoided wrongdoing for three incarnations, and fragment 133 (*OF*443) the souls become holy heroes for all future time (ἐς δὲ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον ἥρωες ἁγνοὶ). Empedocles, too, expects to return to the company of the blessed after three myriad years (DK31B115 = *OF*449), though the picture is complicated by the alternating rule of Love and Strife; perhaps this all recurs in each iteration of the cycle.[92] In Plato, the situation varies in each version of the myth that he produces: in the myth of Er (*Resp.* 621b) the process seems to continue indefinitely, but in the *Meno* (81c), *Phaedo* (82b-c) and possibly *Phaedrus* (248e = *OF*459)[93] the soul can earn its exit.

We can also find the notion of a release without metempsychosis, in connection with the idea of the body as a prison, which I discuss below.[94] This seems to be the case in Plato's *Cratylus* (400c = *OF*430), and, though somewhat later than our period, in Dio Chrysostom.[95]

It therefore seems that the idea of a release from the cycle is not so intimately bound up with the doctrine of metempsychosis as is sometimes assumed.[96]

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in the gold leaves to add to those in Chapter Four. However, there are a number of other possible interpretations (Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 97).

[92] See Primavesi 2008: 264-5 for one interpretation, though I do not see the evidence for the descending and ascending series of incarnations that he posits.

[93] Bluck 1958a suggests that this is not necessarily a final release, but that the process may be repeated.

[94] Section 6.

[95] 'Those of us who die, being already sufficiently punished, are released and depart' (τοὺς δὲ ἀποθνήσκοντας ἡμῶν κεκολασμένους ἤδη ἱκανῶς λύεσθαί τε καὶ ἀπαλλάττεσθαι, *Or.* 30.10-11 = *OF*320, 429).

[96] Obeyesekere 2002: 199-200; cf. Parker 1983: 300-1.

6: The body as tomb of the soul

I should now like to turn to the idea that the body (σῶμα) is the tomb (σῆμα) of the soul, together with apparently related ideas such as the body as the prison of the soul, or that life is really death. These ideas, along with metempsychosis, are often associated with supposed groups of Orphics or Pythagoreans. Is the soma/sema idea in fact linked with the theory of reincarnation? Is it also linked with initiatory rites? We shall need to review the evidence we have for this concept;[97] once again, we shall find that the greater part comes from Plato.

The name with which the idea is often associated is, however, Pythagoras. The Pythagorean Philolaus is quoted by Clement of Alexandria as saying that 'the ancient theologians and seers also testify that through certain punishments the soul is yoked together with the body as if buried in this tomb' (μαρτυρέονται δὲ καὶ οἱ παλαιοὶ θεολόγοι τε καὶ μάντιες, ὡς διά τινας τιμωρίας ἀ ψυχὰ τῶι σώματι συνέζευκται καὶ καθάπερ ἐν σάματι τούτωι τέθαπται, DK44B14 = Clem. Al. *Strom.* 3.3.17.1 = *OF*430). Another Pythagorean, Euxitheus, is credited with the statement that 'the souls of all were bound in the body and the life here for the sake of punishment' (ἔλεγεν ἐνδεδέσθαι τῷ σώματι καὶ τῷ δεῦρο βίῳ τὰς ἁπάντων ψυχὰς τιμωρίας χάριν, Ath. 5.45 157c = *OF*430), adding that the god had decreed that they should stay there until he released them. One of the maxims of Pythagoras himself was 'we come for punishment and must be punished' (ἐπὶ κολάσει γὰρ ἐλθόντας δεὶ κολασθῆναι, Iambl. *VP* 85).

[97] For some general surveys, see Rohde 1925: 396n36, Rehrenböck 1975, Ferwerda 1985, Bernabé 2013b: 134-6, Huffman 2013: 252, Edmonds 2013b: 269-82.

The evidence, however, is less certain than it seems. The maxims (σύμβολα) of Pythagoras were reported by Iamblichus many centuries after his death, and although he seems to have drawn on collections of the classical period, that in itself is no guarantee of authenticity.[98] Moreover, the form of this one is unlike the usual forms of these sayings, which normally answer the questions 'What is ... ?', 'What is the most ... ?', 'What should be done?' (τί ἔστι; τί μάλιστα; τί πρακτέον;).[99] We know of Euxitheus only in the account of the Peripatetic Clearchus, and he may well be fictitious.[100] The authenticity of the Philolaus fragment has been much debated, generally with a negative conclusion.[101] In any case, he ascribes the view to unnamed ancient theologians, not to Pythagoras.

In fact, the term σῆμα, literally 'sign', originally meant in this context a grave monument, rather than tomb in the sense of structure containing the body, as we see for example in τοῦ δὲ τάφον καὶ σῆμ', 'the grave and monument' (Hes. *Sc.* 477); the extension of meaning to the actual tomb seems later than the time of Pythagoras.[102] It must therefore be a question whether these apparently early Pythagorean instances of the soma/sema concept are not later inventions.

[98] Zhmud 2012: 192-205.

[99] Zhmud 2012: 231.

[100] So Burkert 1972: 124n21, Zhmud 2012: 231

[101] Against: Burkert 1972: 248n47, Rehrenböck 1975: 18-19, Ferwerda 1985: 270-1, Huffman 1993: 402-6. For: Bernabé 1995: 229-30, Casadesús 2013: 171n73. Scepticism has centred on its incompatibility with what else is known of Pythagorean attitudes to the body, and on what appear to be signs of Platonic influence.

[102] Ferwerda 1985: 271, *LSJ s.v.* σῆμα 3. Ferwerda's citation of Pl. *Phd.* 81d is, however, incorrect, as the term used there is μνῆμα not σῆμα.

The next evidence is, once again, from Plato, who refers to the idea several times in various forms. The fullest discussion is in the *Cratylus*, the interpretation of which has been much disputed:[103]

> *Ἑρμογένης*: ἀλλὰ δὴ τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο πῶς φῶμεν ἔχειν;
>
> *Σωκράτης*: τὸ σῶμα λέγεις;
>
> *Ἑρμογένης*: ναί.
>
> *Σωκράτης*: πολλαχῇ μοι δοκεῖ τοῦτό γε: ἂν μὲν καὶ σμικρόν τις παρακλίνῃ, καὶ πάνυ. καὶ γὰρ σῆμά τινές φασιν αὐτὸ εἶναι τῆς ψυχῆς, ὡς τεθαμμένης ἐν τῷ νῦν παρόντι: καὶ διότι αὖ τούτῳ σημαίνει ἃ ἂν σημαίνῃ ἡ ψυχή, καὶ ταύτῃ ‘σῆμα’ ὀρθῶς καλεῖσθαι. δοκοῦσι μέντοι μοι μάλιστα θέσθαι οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα, ὡς δίκην διδούσης τῆς ψυχῆς ὧν δὴ ἕνεκα δίδωσιν, τοῦτον δὲ περίβολον ἔχειν, ἵνα σῴζηται, δεσμωτηρίου εἰκόνα: εἶναι οὖν τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦτο, ὥσπερ αὐτὸ ὀνομάζεται, ἕως ἂν ἐκτείσῃ τὰ ὀφειλόμενα, τὸ ‘σῶμα,’ καὶ οὐδὲν δεῖν παράγειν οὐδ᾽ ἓν γράμμα.
>
> (Pl. *Cra.* 400b-c = *OF*430)
>
> Now what shall we say about the next word? You mean ‘body’? Yes. I think this admits of many explanations, if you were to alter it a very little; for some say it is the tomb of the soul, which is as it were buried in what it is now; and again, because by its means the soul gives any signs which it gives, it is for this reason also properly called ‘sign’. However, Orpheus and those around him seem to me most likely to have given it this name with the idea that the soul is undergoing punishment for something, and that it has the body as an enclosure so that it remains safe, like a prison, and that this is, as the name itself denotes, the ‘safe’ for the soul, until it pays what is due, and not even one letter needs to be changed.

The first point to be made is that the *Cratylus* includes over a hundred far-fetched etymologies, which most scholars have assumed are not meant to be

[103] Rohde 1925: 342, 355n43, Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1932: 197, Linforth 1941: 147-8, Long 1948: 73-5, Dodds 1951: 169-70n87, Guthrie 1952: 156-7, Rehrenböck 1975: 21-8, Ferwerda 1985: 268-70, Bernabé 1995: 204-18, Edmonds 2013b: 268-72, Betegh 2014: 157n15. What may be called the traditional reading of the passage, which distinguishes the τινές from the οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα, appears to me to be incorrect; my interpretation follows the general lines laid out by Bernabé.

taken seriously.[104] It certainly seems likely that they were largely devised by Plato, whether he actually believed them or not. Bearing this in mind, my analysis of the passage is as follows:

1 Some (τινες) say the body (σῶμα) is the tomb (σῆμα) of the soul

1.1 They mean that the soul is buried in the body in our present life

2 The body (σῶμα) can also appropriately be called sign (σῆμα) as the soul makes signs through it

3 Orpheus and those around him seem (δοκοῦσι) to me to have given (θέσθαι dependent on δοκοῦσι) it this name (i.e. σῆμα) because the soul is being punished (which is equivalent to:)

3.0 Orpheus and those around him gave it this name

3.1 They seem to me (Socrates) to have done so because the soul is being punished

3.2 (They also seem to me to have done so, with ἔχειν dependent on δοκοῦσι) because the body is like a prison

3.3 (They also seem to me to have done so, with εἶναι dependent on δοκοῦσι) because the body is the safe (σῶμα) of the soul

We therefore learn from (1) and (3.0) that some call the body the tomb of the soul and that Orpheus and those around him gave it this name, and are therefore the τινες referred to in (1). (1.1) just restates (1) in slightly different

[104] Ferwerda 1985: 268. For a contrary view, see Sedley 1998.

words. (2), (3.1), (3.2) and (3.3) are more or less implausible etymological explanations of this in the general style of the *Cratylus*; the last three are explicitly attributed to the Socrates of the dialogue. (2), which is not attested elsewhere, and seems quite in the style of Plato, as well as according with the view of sign and language put forward elsewhere in the dialogue,[105] is probably Platonic too.

If I have seemed to labour this point unnecessarily, it is because many scholars have taken a different view, often vehemently so.[106] As to the identity of 'Orpheus and those around him' (οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα),[107] Orpheus was credited with the authorship of a range of hexameter verse, as well as with the foundation of various rites.[108] While the expression may perhaps be taken as referring to a group known as 'Orphics',[109] it might also indicate, for example, verses attributed to Orpheus which Plato does not believe were actually written by him,[110] or to anonymous verses in the style of those attributed to Orpheus.

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[105] Ferwerda 1985: 272.

[106] E.g. 'This hoary error has in recent years been exposed again and again', Dodds 1951: 169n87. They take δοκοῦσι to apply to the fact of οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα coining the phrase, not to the possible reasons they might have done so. There is a slight change in the construction, as what is likely moves from ὡς δίκην διδούσης in 3.1 to the infinitives in 3.2 and 3.3, but it seems to me a natural one.

[107] Radt (Radt 1980, 1988) has shown that οἱ περὶ + acc., with which οἱ αμφὶ is synonymous, literally 'those around' x, always actually includes the person in question (except in the cases of pronouns or where those accompanying are in some sense a different species); in fact it is sometimes even used as a periphrasis for that person alone. See also Kühner-Gerth §403d. Translations such as Edmonds' 'those connected with Orpheus' (Edmonds 2013b: 270) are therefore inaccurate.

[108] Plato elsewhere uses the expression οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα in connection with rites and prophecies (τελετάς τε καὶ χρησμῳδίας, *Prt.* 316d); Edmonds 2013b: 95-191. See Chapter Two section 6 above.

[109] Bernabé 1995: 223-9, but see Edmonds 2013b: 200, 270-1.

[110] So Burkert 1982: 3-4, who suggests that the plural indicates scepticism.

We can therefore compare Plato's use of this concept with the use he made of the idea of metempsychosis: he has picked up the idea, without giving evidence of knowing much about it in detail, and used it as a focal point around which to develop ideas of his own. This is confirmed by his reference to what seems the same or a similar concept:

> ὁ μὲν οὖν ἐν ἀπορρήτοις λεγόμενος περὶ αὐτῶν λόγος, ὡς ἔν τινι φρουρᾷ ἐσμεν οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ οὐ δεῖ δὴ ἑαυτὸν ἐκ ταύτης λύειν οὐδ᾽ ἀποδιδράσκειν, μέγας τέ τίς μοι φαίνεται καὶ οὐ ῥᾴδιος διιδεῖν·
>
> (Pl. *Phd.* 62b = *OF*429)

> Now the doctrine that is taught in secret about this matter, that we humans are in a kind of prison/guard-post and must not set ourselves free or run away, seems to me to be weighty and not easy to understand.

This is an incidental remark in an argument against suicide, and so far from being especially adapted to Plato's argument, it appears that he does not know quite what to make of it. On the principles of interpretation which I set out earlier,[111] it is therefore unlikely to be his own invention.

It will be observed that the metaphor has changed here, and we have a φρουρά instead of a tomb. The meaning of φρουρά has been much debated.[112] Its normal meaning is something like 'garrison' (*LSJ s.v.* φρουρά), more usually in fact referring to the personnel than to the place in which they are stationed.[113] Subsequently, however, in authors influenced by Plato, it

[111] Chapter Two section 4 above.

[112] Rohde 1925: 396n36, Boyancé 1963, Strachan 1970, Ferwerda 1985: 274-5, Bernabé 1995: 218-23, Edmonds 2013b: 275-80.

[113] The pseudo-Platonic *Axiochus*, clearly depending on this passage, feels the difficulty, and changes the word to φρούριον, 'fort': ἡμεῖς μὲν γὰρ ἐσμεν ψυχή, ζῷον ἀθάνατον ἐν θνητῷ καθειργμένον φουρίῳ· τὸ δὲ σκῆνος τουτὶ πρὸς κακοῦ περιήρμοσεν ἡ φύσις, 'For each of us is a soul, an immortal being shut up in a mortal fortress; and Nature has put this hut together for evil', 371d.

seems clearly to have been interpreted as prison.[114] The decisive evidence comes in Plato's other instance of the term, where it must mean something like prison. The judge of the underworld sentences the guilty soul, and 'immediately sends it away without honour to the φρουρά, to endure there when it arrives the appropriate sufferings' (ἀτίμως ταύτην ἀπέπεμψεν εὐθὺ τῆς φρουρᾶς, οἳ μέλλει ἐλθοῦσα ἀνατλῆναι τὰ προσήκοντα πάθη, *Grg.* 525a).

This is confirmed by the combination of tomb and prison in the *Phaedrus*: 'being pure and unentombed (ἀσήμαντοι) in this which carrying about we call the body, imprisoned (δεδεσμευμένοι) like an oyster' (καθαροὶ ὄντες καὶ ἀσήμαντοι τούτου ὃ νῦν δὴ σῶμα περιφέροντες ὀνομάζομεν, ὀστρέου τρόπον δεδεσμευμένοι, 250c). ἀσήμαντοι is a pun, twisting the usual meanings of 'unmarked, unintelligible, insignificant' (*LSJ s.v.* ἀσήμαντος) to one derived from σῆμα, 'tomb'. We also saw δεσμωτήριον, 'prison', used as an explanation of σῆμα in the *Cratylus*.

Are prison and tomb just variants of the same basic idea, or do they express different concepts? Here we perhaps should remember Plato's fanciful etymologies in the *Cratylus*. They move from the original pejorative sense of the soul entombed in the body, through the neutral meaning of the body as

[114] *neque auras dispiciunt clausae tenebris et carcere caeco*, 'closed in the blind darkness of this prison they do not see out to the winds of air', Verg. *Aen.* 6.733-4; ὡς οὖν ἄφθαρτον οὖσαν τὴν ψυχὴν διανοοῦ ταὐτὸ ταῖς ἁλισκομέναις ὄρνισι πάσχειν, 'the soul, being incapable of death, is afflicted in the same manner as birds that are kept in a cage', Plut. *Cons. uxor.* 611d = *OF*595; εἶναι δὲ τὸν μὲν τόπον τοῦτον, ὃν κόσμον ὀνομάζομεν, δεσμωτήριον ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν κατεσκευασμένον χαλεπόν τε καὶ δυσάερον, 'this place which we call the universe, they tell us, is a prison prepared by the gods', Dio Chrys. *Or.* 30.11 = *OF*320, 429. For other examples, see Boyancé 1963: 8-10. For the guard-post interpretation: *vetatque Pythagoras iniussu imperatoris, id est dei, de praesidio et statione vitae decedere*, 'Pythagoras bids us stand like faithful sentries and not quit our post until God, our Captain, gives the word', Cic. *Sen.* 73.

sign of the soul, to an actually positive one of the body keeping the soul safe.[115] I suggest, therefore, that though Plato picked up the soma/sema idea as a potentially fruitful one – the pun doubtless appealed to him – he was unhappy with its negative connotations, and therefore changed the tomb to the weaker form of a prison, and even to the actually positive form of a safe. If this is correct, then the tomb version is the only one original in contemporary religious thought, and the prison due to Plato himself.

Plato has yet another expression of this idea:[116]

> οὐ γάρ τοι θαυμάζοιμ᾽ ἂν εἰ Εὐριπίδης ἀληθῆ ἐν τοῖσδε λέγει, λέγων – ‘τίς δ᾽ οἶδεν, εἰ τὸ ζῆν μέν ἐστι κατθανεῖν, τὸ κατθανεῖν δὲ ζῆν;’ καὶ ἡμεῖς τῷ ὄντι ἴσως τέθναμεν: ἤδη γάρ του ἔγωγε καὶ ἤκουσα τῶν σοφῶν ὡς νῦν ἡμεῖς τέθναμεν καὶ τὸ μὲν σῶμά ἐστιν ἡμῖν σῆμα,
>
> (*Grg.* 492e-493a = Eur. fr. 638 = *OF*430, 457)

> For I should not wonder if Euripides did not speak the truth when he said ‘Who knows if to live is to be dead and to be dead to live?’, and we are perhaps really dead; for I once heard from the wise that we are dead now and the body is our tomb

The Euripides quotation also appears in Aristophanes (*Ran.* 1082, 1477) and a number of later sources.[117] The idea that, in addition to being dead in this life, humans are also really alive when they are dead is new, however, and it may be that Plato has combined two similar-sounding concepts from different sources. Heraclitus says something similar: ‘Immortals are mortals, mortals immortals; living their death, dying their life’ (ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοὶ ἀθάνατοι, ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον τεθνεῶτες,

[115] For the body as a protection for the soul, see also *Ti.* 73b, 74a; Ferwerda 1985: 275, Edmonds 2013b: 278.

[116] Bernabé 2007a.

[117] Dover 1993: 328.

DK22B62 = *OF*455). Possibly these are *ad hoc* paradoxes invented by Heraclitus and Euripides, unconnected to soma/sema.

The final piece of evidence for this concept in the classical period comes from a fragment of the *Protrepticus* of Aristotle. After alluding to a saying of 'the ancients' (οἱ ἀρχαιότεροι) that we live for punishment, which we shall examine further in the next section, he adds:

> πάνυ γὰρ ἡ σύζευξις τοιούτῳ τινὶ ἔοικε πρὸς τὸ σῶμα τῆς ψυχῆς, ὥσπερ γὰρ τοὺς ἐν τῇ Τυρρηνίᾳ φασὶ βασανίζειν πολλάκις τοὺς ἁλισκομένους προσδεσμεύοντας κατ' ἀντικρὺ τοῖς ζῶσι νεκροὺς ἀντιπροσώπους ἕκαστον πρὸς ἕκαστον μέρος προσαρμόττοντας, οὕτως ἔοικεν ἡ ψυχὴ διατετάσθαι καὶ προσκεκολλῆσθαι πᾶσι τοῖς αἰσθητικοῖς τοῦ σώματος μέλεσιν.
>
> (Arist. fr. 60 Rose = *Protrepticus* 44 = *OF*430)
>
> For the conjunction of the soul with the body looks very much like a thing of this sort; for as the Tyrrhenians are said to torture their captives often by chaining corpses right onto the living, face to face, fitting limb to limb, similarly the soul seems to be extended through and stuck onto all the sensitive members of the body.

This gruesome image seems to express the same point of view as the wordplay on σῶμα and σῆμα.

To return to the questions that I posed at the start of this section: is the soma/sema concept linked to metempsychosis? Dodds sees the common element as a puritan horror of the body,[118] though, as Bernabé observes, Pythagoras seems to have been glad to recall his previous incarnations.[119] The idea of the body as a garment of the soul, which we saw in Empedocles ('clothing it in a strange garment of flesh', σαρκῶν ἀλλογνῶτι περιστέλλουσα

[118] Dodds 1951: 152.

[119] Bernabé 2013b: 136; as I remarked in section 2 above, however, many of these come via Heraclides Ponticus, and may be suspected of being fictional.

χιτῶνι, DK31B126 = *OF*450), also appears in Epictetus and a variety of other contexts unconnected with reincarnation.[120] Obeyesekere has suggested that the reference is not to incarnation in the present human body, but to the whole cycle of rebirth,[121] but there is no hint of this in the evidence reviewed above. The metaphor in soma/sema is in fact ill adapted to metempsychosis: a tomb is normally seen as a final resting place, not as somewhere you leave and then return to. As we have seen, there is no real evidence for a link.

The evidence, then, for the soma/sema concept of the body as a tomb comes primarily from Plato. There is one reference in Aristotle, but the sources that ascribe it to Pythagoras may be later inventions. If we discard Plato's own etymological speculations, it does not appear that he knew much beyond the bare phrase, except that its origin had some connection with Orpheus. The variant of the body as prison rather than tomb may be Plato's own adaptation. The Euripidean paradox that death is life and life death, though juxtaposed with these by Plato, is not clearly connected. Although a link with metempsychosis has sometimes been suggested, there is little evidence for this, and the two concepts do not seem altogether compatible.

[120] Edmonds 2013b: 281-2.

[121] Obeyeskere 2002: 199-200; cf. Parker 1983: 300-1.

7: Penalty and recompense

It is noticeable that in the evidence that we examined in the previous section there is frequent reference to some kind of punishment. Aristotle stated that in the initiation rites (τὰς τελετὰς) they say that everyone is by nature (φύσει) made for punishment (ἐπὶ τιμωρίᾳ), and that the ancients (οἱ ἀρχαιότεροι) say that the soul is punished (διδόναι τιμωρίαν) and that human beings live for the chastisement of certain great faults (ζῆν ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ κολάσει μεγάλων τινῶν ἁμαρτημάτων).[122] Plato suggested that the reason that the equation of the body to a tomb was originally made was that the soul is being punished for something (ὡς δίκην διδούσης τῆς ψυχῆς ὧν ἕνεκα δίδωσιν, *Cra.* 400c = *OF*430).

The Pythagoreans Euxitheus and Philolaus, if the quotations from them are genuine, or else those later writers who invented them,[123] say that 'the souls of all were bound in the body and the life here for the sake of punishment' (ἔλεγεν ἐνδεδέσθαι τῷ σώματι καὶ τῷ δεῦρο βίῳ τὰς ἁπάντων ψυχὰς τιμωρίας χάριν, Euxitheus *ap.* Ath. 5.45 157c = *OF*430), and that 'the ancient theologians and seers also testify that through certain punishments the soul is yoked together with the body as if buried in this tomb' (μαρτυρέονται δὲ καὶ οἱ παλαιοὶ θεολόγοι τε καὶ μάντιες, ὡς διά τινας τιμωρίας ἀ ψυχὰ τῶι σώματι συνέζευκται καὶ καθάπερ ἐν σάματι τούτωι τέθαπται, Philol. DK44B14 = Clem. Al. *Strom.* 3.3.17.1 = *OF*430). Iamblichus credits Pythagoras with the maxim

[122] τίς ἂν οὖν εἰς ταῦτα βλέπων οἴοιτο εὐδαίμων εἶναι καὶ μακάριος, οἳ πρῶτον εὐθὺς φύσει συνέσταμεν, καθάπερ φασὶν οἱ τὰς τελετὰς λέγοντες, ὥσπερ ἂν ἐπὶ τιμωρίᾳ πάντες; τοῦτο γὰρ θείως οἱ ἀρχαιότεροι λέγουσι τὸ φάναι διδόναι τὴν ψυχὴν τιμωρίαν καὶ ζῆν ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ κολάσει μεγάλων τινῶν ἁμαρτημάτων. (fr. 60 Rose = *Protrepticus* 43-4 = *OF*430)

[123] Section 2 above.

'we come for punishment and must be punished' (ἐπὶ κολάσει γὰρ ἐλθόντας δεὶ κολασθῆναι, Iambl. *VP* 85).[124] We see also in Dio Chrysostom that humans are not dear to the gods, but 'are punished by them and have been born for chastisement, being indeed in a prison in life for as long a time as we each live' (κολαζόμεθά τε ὑπ' αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ τιμωρίᾳ γεγόναμεν, ἐν φρουρᾷ δὴ ὄντες ἐν τῷ βίῳ τοσοῦτον χρόνον ὅσον ἕκαστοι ζῶμεν, *Or.* 30.10 = *OF*320, 429).

It is difficult to tell with a number of these sources how far they go back to the classical period, and how far they reflect post-Platonic and neo-Pythagorean ideas. The idea of punishment, however, is already present in Empedocles, where a divine decree condemns the guilty daimon, or soul, to an extended period of reincarnation in various forms (DK31B115 = *OF*449). It is not clear what the daimon is guilty of. The text is uncertain: 'whenever one in error, from fear, ? his own limbs [defiles his own limbs through murder], having by his error made false the oath he swore' (εὖτέ τις ἁμπλακίησι φόβῳ φίλα γυῖα †μιν† [φόνῳ φίλα γυὶα μιήνῃ], †ὅς καὶ† ἐπίορκον ἁμαρτήσας ἐπομόσσῃ). φόνῳ φίλα γυὶα μιήνῃ ('defiles his own limbs through murder'), is an emendation of the sixteenth-century editor Stephanus.[125] Stephanus was doubtless influenced by Plutarch, who says that Empedocles presented an allegory of souls punished for murders and eating flesh and each other (φόνων καὶ βρώσεως σαρκῶν καὶ ἀλληλοφαγίας δίκην τίνουσι, *De esu carn.* 1.7 996b-c = *OF*318).[126] Empedocles does, however, include himself among the guilty

[124] See also Iamblichus *De mysteriis* 4.4, where 'powers greater than us' (οἱ μέντοι κρείττονες ἡμῶν) 'impose some punishment' (τινα δὴ τιμωρίαν ἐπάγουσιν) on the soul for its offences (ἁμρτημάτων).

[125] Wright 1995 *ad loc*.

[126] Edmonds 2013b: 334-6. Primavesi, however, sees the daimon as a guilty Olympian god, with a cycle of punishment paralleling the Empedoclean cosmic cycle (Primavesi 2008: 251, 261-5). Although Empedocles does indeed say that he is no longer mortal, but an immortal god (ἐγὼ δ' ὑμῖν θεὸς ἄμβροτος οὐκέτι θνητὸς πωλεῦμαι, DK31B112 = *OF*447), I find it difficult to believe that he is intending to add himself to the Olympian pantheon.

daimons, which would seem to entail on this reading that he was confessing to murder. The interpretation that reincarnation is the punishment for eating animals because animals may be reincarnated humans punished for eating animals is suspiciously circular. We cannot really tell why the daimon was punished.

There is another term used by Pindar, which occasionally also appears in contexts not obviously connected to the idea of the body as tomb. This is ποινή, a word with a range of meanings including 'penalty', 'reward', 'satisfaction', 'redemption' and 'recompense' (*LSJ s.v.* ποινή). Although it only occurs in a few sources concerned with the afterlife, it has been seen as a key concept in a certain interpretation of those sources, and therefore requires closer examination.

First, I shall briefly list the five relevant occurrences of the term in this context.[127] Pindar, in the Second Olympian, says that 'the hapless souls of those who have died here immediately render the ποινή' (θανόντων μὲν ἐνθάδ᾽ αὐτίκ᾽ ἀπάλαμνοι φρένες ποινὰς ἔτεισαν, *Ol.* 2.57-8 = *OF*445). In fragment 133 (*OF*443, he speaks of those 'from whom Persephone will receive the ποινή of ancient grief' (ὅισι δὲ Φερσεφόνα ποινὰν παλαιοῦ πένθεος δέξεται). Moving further afield, in the sixth column of the Derveni Papyrus[128] we read 'the magi make offerings, as if, as it were, paying a ποινή' (τὴν θυσίαν ... ποιοῦσιν οἱ μάγοι, ὡσπερεὶ ποινὴν ἀποδιδόντες). Two fourth century BC funerary gold leaves[129] from Thurii (A2-3) contain the words, addressed by the soul to Persephone, 'ποινή I have repaid on account of deeds not just' (ποινὰν

[127] Expressions such as δίκην ἐκτεῖσαι (Pl. *Leg.* 870e = *OF*433) may be meant as an equivalent, but are more difficult to pick out.

[128] Chapter Seven section 5.

[129] Chapter Four section 2.

δ' ἀνταπέτεισ' ἔργων ἕνεκ' οὔτι δικαίων). Finally, the Gurôb Papyrus (*OF*578)[130] has ποινας followed by πατε (l.4), presumably the start of a reference to fathers.

The explanation of this term frequently put forward, most notably by Bernabé, but also by others,[131] is that it refers to the Orphic myth of the killing of Dionysus by the Titans, whose guilt has been inherited by humanity. The presence of the myth has been seen in the sources listed above.

As I established in my earlier discussion of Orphism,[132] we have no unequivocal evidence for the myth before the Hellenistic period, and certainly none for the idea that mankind inherited the guilt of the Titans. That does not preclude their existence in earlier times, given the scanty evidence for anything in this area, and the possibility that they might constitute some sort of secret doctrine, (ἐν ἀπορρήτοις, Pl. *Phd.* 62b = *OF*429, 669). It is precisely this that Bernabé and those that follow him believe to account for the allusions to ποινή and punishment and indeed for metempsychosis seen itself as a punishment.[133] In view of the lack of direct evidence, we shall need to examine critically each case.

I shall look at the five instances of ποινή listed above, at the references to punishment that we examined earlier, and at other allusions from the classical period that have been considered relevant. It must be recalled that the word ποινή can bear a number of different meanings (penalty, reward, satisfaction,

[130] Chapter Three section 10.

[131] See e.g. West 1983: 170-1, Parker 1995: 496, Most 1997: 131-2, Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 127.

[132] Chapter Two section 6 above.

[133] Set out most fully in Bernabé 2002. For metempsychosis, see Bernabé 2011: 185-90, following Proclus *In Remp.* 2.338.11-12 Kroll = *OF*338.

redemption, recompense), and that we need not assume that the meaning is the same in each instance, or that the ποινή is incurred for the same reason. In each case, we need to decide, as far as is possible, what is the meaning of ποινή, in what does it consist, why it is incurred and what evidence there might be of a connection to the guilt of the Titans.

(i)

> εἰ δέ νιν ἔχων τις οἶδεν τὸ μέλλον,
> ὅτι θανόντων μὲν ἐνθάδ᾽ αὐτίκ᾽ ἀπάλαμνοι φρένες
> ποινὰς ἔτεισαν, τὰ δ᾽ ἐν τᾷδε Διὸς ἀρχᾷ
> ἀλιτρὰ κατὰ γᾶς δικάζει τις ἐχθρᾷ
> λόγον φράσαις ἀνάγκᾳ:
>
> (Pind. *Ol. 2*.56-60 = *OF*445)
>
> If one has and knows the future, that the hapless souls of those who have died here immediately pay the ποινή, and one under earth judges the crimes committed in this realm of Zeus, passing judgment with hateful necessity.

ἔτεισαν, from 'to pay (a penalty)' (*LSJ s.v.* τίνω 1), guarantees the meaning 'penalty' for ποινή here. The scholia on this passage are divided on whether this is in effect a hendiadys, and the judgment of the anonymous judge is precisely the imposition of the penalty, or whether we have a more complicated situation with two separate groups.[134] In any event, there is no reason to doubt that the misdeeds for which the penalty is paid are those of the person in question. There is nothing to suggest the Titans or inherited guilt.

[134] Long 1948: 32-4, Willcock 1995 *ad loc*, Bernabé 2007b: 163, Catenacci 2014-15. The interpretation of Chrysippus, that the penalty was paid at the hands of the dead (θανόντων) does not seem possible Greek (Χρύσιππος οὕτως ἀκούει ἐνθάδε μὲν ὑπὸ τῶν θανόντων ἐτιμωρήθησαν, schol. vet. 104b), but it is interesting that he thought that the dead as enforcers of justice plausible. See on this Megino Rodríguez 2019: 37-42.

(ii)

> ὅισι δὲ Φερσεφόνα ποινὰν παλαιοῦ πένθεος
> δέξεται, εἰς τὸν ὕπερθεν ἅλιον κείνων ἐνάτῳ ἔτεϊ
> ἀνδιδοῖ ψυχὰς πάλιν,
>
> (Pind. fr. 133 = *OF*443)
>
> Those from whom Persephone will receive the ποινή of ancient grief, in the ninth year she gives back to the sun above

This passage has been the subject of an ingenious analysis by Rose.[135] He takes ποινή here to mean something like 'compensation for'.[136] The grief referred to, he argues,[137] cannot be the souls', as they would not pay compensation for their own grief, so must be Persephone's. As gods cannot be grieved by mortal actions, it must be caused by a god. It cannot be caused by her rape by Hades,[138] as humans have no responsibility for this. The only other divine crime known that could be relevant is the killing of her son Dionysus by the Titans, so this must have caused the grief. But if human souls have to pay compensation for it, Pindar must have known of the Titans eating Dionysus and man springing from their ashes, as otherwise they would have had no guilt.

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[135] Rose 1936; see also Linforth 1941: 345-50, Rose 1943, Long 1948: 39-41, Bluck 1958a: 161, Holzhausen 2004: 32-4, Edmonds 2013b: 304-26.

[136] As Rose sees, the meaning 'penalty for the cause of grief' for ποινὰν πένθεος would not be normal Greek usage. The genitive for the offence after ποινή would be normal (*LSJ s.v.* ποινή), but the use of πένθος for the cause of grief would not, despite *LSJ*'s citation of Pi. *Isthm.* 7.37 (*s.v.* πένθος II), where the meaning 'grief' in fact makes perfect sense. Rohde's equation of πένθος with guilt (Rohde 1925: 442n34) is also not acceptable. If 'penalty' were to be retained, I would prefer an appositional genitive (Smyth 1956 §1322; Linforth 1941: 347), with 'penalty of grief' meaning 'penalty consisting of grief', but this would still not explain why the penalty was imposed.

[137] Rose 1936: 84-8.

[138] As argued by Holzhausen 2004: 32-4, Edmonds 2013b: 304-26. Holzhausen suggests an Eleusinian context for the fragment, but I see no sign of this.

Rose's arguments have been generally accepted,[139] but there are a number of difficulties. His conclusion depends on a long chain of reasoning, even if each individual step might seem plausible. It is strange that Persephone is still exacting retribution from mankind. The actual perpetrators of the crime were punished at the time, which ought to have settled the matter, and the victim himself, Dionysus, seems to bear no grudge against humanity. I also find it difficult to believe that the expression 'ancient grief' could be used of something fairly temporary rather than something continuing. Dionysus was quickly restored to life again, so the grief would have rapidly disappeared.

We should look at how Pindar uses the word ποινή elsewhere. It appears four times in the epinicians.[140] We have already seen it with the meaning 'penalty' in *Olympian 2* ((i) above). In two cases the meaning is something like 'reward': reward in the afterlife (*Nem.* 1.70) and reward in the form of Pindar's own song (*Pyth.* 1.59).[141] In the Fourth Pythian, however, the meaning is closer to 'remedy, release': Battus, the stammering ruler of Kyrene, 'asking the gods if there is some ποινή for his ill-sounding speech' (δυσθρόου φωνᾶς ἀνακρινόμενον ποινὰ τίς ἔσται πρὸς θεῶν, *Pyth.* 4.63). This was read in antiquity as equivalent to 'change or release' (ἀμοιβὴ ἢ λύσις, schol. vet. 111), and this has been generally followed.[142] The connecting logic is perhaps that of ποινή as paying off or discharge.

In a context that clearly refers to reincarnation, as the souls are given back to the sun above, we can then take ποινή πένθεος as release from the pains of

[139] E.g by Burkert 1985: 298, Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 72, Graf and Johnston 2013: 68-9.

[140] Also fr. 52f.

[141] 'Reward' is also the usual meaning for the virtual synonym ἄποινα (*Ol.* 7.16, *Pyth.* 2.14, *Nem.* 7.16, *Isthm.* 3/4.7, *Isthm.* 8.4); Edmonds 2013b: 307-8.

[142] *LSJ s.v.*ποινή I.4, and e.g. Bowra 1969 'release', Kirkwood 1985 'remedy'.

birth and rebirth.[143] It is true that the immediate result is another incarnation, but this is as rulers, athletes and philosophers, who 'in the time to come are called by men pure heroes' (ἐς δὲ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον ἥρωες ἁγνοὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπων καλεῦνται). This then would be their final good incarnation before achieving a permanent status as heroes.

I think there may be confirmation of this interpretation in a vocabulary cluster centring on the concept of reincarnation. Empedocles (DK31B115 = *OF*449) by an ancient (παλαιόν) decree exchanges one hard path of life for another (ἀργαλέας βιότοιο μεταλλάσσοντα κελεύθους). In the fourth-century BC gold leaf (A1) the soul who comes to Persephone (χθονίων βασίλεα) has flown out of the hard cycle of heavy grief (κύκλου δ' ἐξέπταν βαρυπενθέος ἀργαλέοιο), which I have suggested refers to the cycle of reincarnation.[144] There are suggestive links in vocabulary (ἀργαλέος, παλαιός, πένθος) between Pindar, Empedocles and the gold leaf, as well as the reference to Persephone. Both παλαιός and πένθος are here linked with reincarnation.

ποινή, then, in this instance most plausibly refers to discharge from the hardships and sorrows of reincarnation. It will be received or accepted (δέξεται) by Persephone, in her capacity as queen of the world below, so it is not initiated or decreed by her. We are not told by what mechanism or agency this discharge comes about. Plato does cite this passage as a reason for living as holy a life as possible (ὡς ὁσιώτατα διαβιῶναι τὸν βίον, *Meno* 81b = *OF*424), which may mean he thinks the ποινή a reward for a virtuous life,[145] though

[143] So Linforth 1941:347, however taking ποινή as 'penalty'. See also Seaford 1986: 7-8, who suggests the reincarnated ones are the Titans themselves, for which there is no evidence.

[144] Section 5 above, and see (iv) below.

[145] Bluck 1958a: 161n4.

Plato, as we have seen,[146] was prone to reinterpret initiates as the virtuous (*Phd.* 69d = *OF*576, 81a, *Grg.* 493a = *OF*434). If we reject Rose's interpretation, as I think we must, there is no trace of the Titans or the guilt inherited from them.

(iii) I shall deal in greater detail with the *Derveni Papyrus* in subsequent chapters.[147] Here I shall only look at the reference to ποινή, anticipating to some extent my conclusions there.

The sixth column describes how hindering daimons (δαίμονες ἐμποδών) block the way of the souls of the initiates, until they are removed or changed (μεθιστάναι) by the incantations of the magi. 'For this reason, the magi make offerings, as if, as it were, paying a ποινή' (τὴν θυσίαν τούτου ἕνεκεν ποιοῦσιν οἱ μάγοι, ὡσπερεὶ ποινὴν ἀποδιδόντες, VI.4-5). They offer many-knobbed cakes with wineless libations of water and milk.

This use of ποινή has also been linked by Bernabé to the crime of the Titans.[148] As I noted above, it is a feature of his theory that the Derveni theogony is supposed to be an early version of the Rhapsodic theogony which contains this myth. There is no trace of the myth in what we have, however, and indeed it emphasises the primacy of Zeus,[149] not Dionysus, who is not mentioned.

It is clear that ποινή is not used here in the same way as (i) or (ii) above, being neither a sentence of a judge on an individual, nor a release from reincarnation. There is in fact no mention of either judges or metempsychosis

[146] Section 4.

[147] Chapter Seven section 5 and Chapter Eight below.

[148] Bernabé 2014: 45-6; see also Parker 1995: 496, Most 1997: 131-2.

[149] Betegh 2004: 182-223.

in this document, any more than there is of hindering daimons or magi in Pindar. We are dealing with a very different picture of the afterlife. The offerings are not actually said to be a ποινή, but just to be similar (ὡσπερεί) to one. I suggest that the meaning might be something like 'recompense' or 'redemption', in the sense of what is due to the daimons in order to neutralise them.[150]

(iv) In three fourth century BC funerary gold leaves from Thurii (A1-3) with similar text, the soul of the deceased comes before Persephone and the other deities of the underworld, asking that it may be sent to the seats of the blessed. In support of this request, the soul makes, among others, the following statements: 'I also claim I am of your blessed race' (καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ὑμων γένος ὄλβιον εὔχομαι εἶμεν, A1-3), 'ποινή I have repaid on account of deeds not just' (ποινὰν δ' ἀνταπέτεισ' ἔργων ἕνεκ' οὔτι δικαίων, A2-3), 'I flew out of the hard circle of heavy grief' (κύκλου δ' ἐξέπταν βαρυπενθέος ἀργαλέοιο, A1).

As the soul has already repaid (ἀνταποτίνω) the ποινή when it appears before Persephone, it is natural to suppose that it has done this before its death. The reference to exiting the cycle of heavy grief may be to the cycle of reincarnation. Again, we are not told either the nature of the unjust deeds or the means of expiating them. It seems clear, however, that it cannot relate to humanity's descent from the Titans, as the soul's lineage is put forward as a boast (εὔχομαι) to recommend it to Persephone, which would be impossible if it were the cause of their guilt and Persephone's grief.

[150] Johnston 1999: 138 suggests that it is intended to atone for the deaths of the daimons themselves, the reasoning for which I do not follow.

We can look at this in conjunction with gold leaf D3, from 4th century BC Pherai, which after giving a number of passwords[151] goes on: 'Enter the sacred meadow. For the initiate is ἄποινος.' (εἴσιθι ἱερὸν λειμῶνα. ἄποινος γὰρ ὁ μύστης). Here it is made explicit that the state which leads to the better fate is the result of initiation. The rare word ἄποινος,[152] presumably meaning something like 'without ποινή to pay', may imply that the initiate has already paid the ποινή in the initiation, thus harmonising with the statements in A1-3, or it may represent the slightly different conception that because of the initiation he or she has no penalty to pay at all. As we saw in the previous chapter, we cannot assume that the gold leaves all have the same origin or are consistent among themselves.

(v) The final example that actually uses the word ποινή comes from Egypt, the third century BC Gurôb Papyrus (*P. Gurôb* 1 = *OF*578), which I discussed in an earlier chapter.[153] The fourth line preserves just the words α τεμον ποινας πατε, which places ποινή in connection with fathers or ancestors. West's supplementation of --πατε το πατέρων ἀθεμίστων, 'lawless ancestors', is designed to link this with the Orphic myth of the Titans (προγόνων ἀθεμίστων, 'lawless ancestors', Dam. *In Plat. Phd.* 1.11 = *OF*350). Later in the text, there are references to 'one Dionysus' (εις διονυσος, l.23), and to a bull-roarer,

[151] σύμβολα· Ἀνδρικεπαιδόθυρσον. Ἀνδρικεπαιδόθυρσον. Βριμώ. Βριμώ.

[152] ἄποινος in this sense appears to be a hapax. There is a noun ἄποινα (by haplology from ἀπόποινα, *LSJ s.v.*) used in Homer for 'ransom' and generally with meaning similar to ποινή, a possible adjective ἀποίνιμος (conjectured for Hes. fr. 124 MW = schol. Pl. *Symp.* 183b as an opposite of ἐμποίνιμος) meaning an offence 'not incurring punishment' (of breaking lover's oaths), and a later-attested adjective ἄποινος with the meaning 'wineless' (libations) (Eust. *Il.* 8.518). Translations offered for ἄποινος in D3 include 'has paid the price' (Bremmer 2002: 22) 'sine poena' (Bernabé 2004-7 *ad OF*493), 'free from punishment' (Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 157), 'without penalty' (Edmonds 2011b: 37) and 'is redeemed' (Graf and Johnston 2013: 39). See also Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 157-8, Edmonds 2013: 319n60.

[153] Chapter Three section 10. Text: Hordern 2000; translation: Graf and Johnston 2013: 217-8.

knucklebones and a mirror (ρομβος αστραγαλοι ... εσοπτρος, ll.29-30), which were named several centuries later by Clement of Alexandria (*Protr.* 2.17-18 = *OF*306) as the toys used by the Titans to decoy Dionysus. In contrast to the earlier passages, this does at least combine several features connected to the myth.

The papyrus, however, contains a great deal of other material interspersed with this, including a reference to a possibly initiatory rite, invocations of Demeter, Rhea, the Kouretes, Eubouleus, Pallas and Irikepaios, and what seem to be passwords or formulaic statements made by initiates. It may be a *hieros logos* of the kind mentioned in a Ptolemaic edict (*P. Berlin* 11774). Even if, as I found plausible in my earlier discussion, it is connected with a Dionysiac initiation cult, it certainly includes a number of decidedly eclectic elements. We just do not have sufficient context to say what ποινή means here.

(vi) Passing to other sources which do not use the word ποινή, but have been linked to it, we have first of all the references to punishment that I listed above. As these were connected with the soma/sema concept, the punishment must be normal human life on earth.

The reason for these punishments is never specified, and indeed seems to be left deliberately indefinite and vague.[154] We find such phrases as 'certain great faults' (μεγάλων τινῶν ἁμαρτημάτων, Arist. fr. 60 = *OF*430), 'punishment for that it is punished for' (δίκην διδούσης ... ὧν ἕνεκα δίδωσιν, Pl. *Cra.* 400c = *OF*430), 'certain punishments' (τινας τιμωρίας, Philol. DK44B14 = *OF*430), and later in Cicero 'some crimes' (*scelera*, *Hortensius* fr. 88). We might also compare 'on account of deeds not just' (ἔργων ἕνεκ' οὔτι δικαίων) in the gold leaves ((iv) above). This studied reticence seems more than accidental. It may

[154] Bianchi 1966: 117-8.

be that it was a secret doctrine that they were not allowed to reveal, though it is not clear what the source would be of a prohibition that would bind all these disparate authors. It may simply be that they did not know, that they had heard of the saying that human life was a punishment, but knew no more than that.

(vii) Plato remarks in the *Phaedrus* that 'diseases and the greatest troubles have fallen on certain families through ancient guilt' (νόσων γε καὶ πόνων τῶν μεγίστων, ἃ δὴ παλαιῶν ἐκ μηνιμάτων ποθὲν ἔν τισι τῶν γενῶν, 244d = *OF*575). In the *Republic*, he refers to travelling priests who can cure (ἀκεῖσθαι) 'wrongs committed by a man or his ancestors' (ἀδίκημά του γέγονεν αὐτοῦ ἢ προγόνων, 364c = *OF*573).[155] These are in both cases clearly the misdeeds of human ancestors.[156] Elsewhere Plato ascribes temple robbing to an evil neither human nor divine (οὐκ ἀνθρώπινόν ... κακὸν οὐδὲ θεῖον) bred in humans from ancient unpurified wrongdoing (ἐμφυόμενοις ἐκ παλαιῶν καὶ ἀκαθάρτων τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἀδικημάτων, *Leg.* 854b = *OF*37), which also may denote crimes of ancestors.[157]

(viii) Some references to the Titans have been seen as relevant. Xenocrates said that the φρουρά of the *Cratylus* was 'Titanic and culminates in Dionysus' (Τιτανική ἐστιν καὶ εἰς Διόνυσον ἀποκορυφοῦται, fr. 219 = *OF*38). It appears, however, that he subscribed to the doctrine that the human race had existed forever (*semper humanum genus fuisse*, Censorinus *D.N.* 4.3 = fr. 59 Heinze),[158] in which case he could not have been referring to its Titanic origin. He must

[155] Chapter One section 4.

[156] Gagné 2013: 351, 361.

[157] 'Neither human nor divine' is puzzling. Dodds (1951: 177n133) sees a reference to the Titans. Edmonds (2013b: 330-2) suggests the Erinyes.

[158] Linforth 1941: 339.

have just meant that the prison was as secure as that of the Titans in Tartarus (Hes. *Th.* 717-814): as far below the earth as would take an anvil ten days to fall, they are hidden in a mouldy dark place walled in bronze and may never leave (τοῖς οὐκ ἐξιτόν ἐστι, 732).

Plato in the *Laws* describes the worst kind of men as 'showing and imitating the old Titanic nature we are told of, reverting to the same things and passing a hard existence not ceasing from evil' (τὴν λεγομένην παλαιὰν Τιτανικὴν φύσιν ἐπιδεικνῦσι καὶ μιμουμένοις, ἐπὶ τὰ αὐτὰ πάλιν ἐκεῖνα ἀφικομένους, χαλεπὸν αἰῶνα διάγοντας μὴ λῆξαί ποτε κακῶν, 701c = *OF*37).[159] 'Imitating' (μιμουμένοις) implies that the men are not Titanic themselves, and Cicero interprets the passage as referring to their war against the gods in the Titanomachy (*illi caelestibus ... adversentur*, *Leg.* 3.2.5).

(ix) In some gold leaves from Pelinna, third century BC the soul of the deceased is instructed to tell Persephone that Bacchios himself has freed it (Βάκχιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε) (D1-2).[160] This is usually read in conjunction with an Orphic fragment preserved by one of the later Neoplatonists, which says that Dionysus is called Lusios,[161] as he has power over (τοῖσιν ἔχων κράτος) lawless ancestors (προγόνων ἀθεμίστων) and can release men from harsh suffering and boundless frenzy (Dam. *In Plat. Phd.* 1.11 = *OF*350). The gold leaves presumably refer to a Dionysiac initiation. The Orphic fragment does bring Dionysus for once into contact with ancestral guilt, but it is difficult to see how this could refer to the Titans. As they have been destroyed, in what sense

[159] Bernabé 2002: 418-20 argues for a reference to the Orphic myth, Linforth 1941: 339-45 and Edmonds 2013b: 326-34 against.

[160] Graf 1991: 89-91, Graf 1993: 243-4, Parker 1995: 498, Edmonds 1999: 54-5, Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 66-76, Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2011: 79-81, Edmonds 2013b: 322-4.

[161] See Chapter Three section 6.

could he have power over them? There is no reason why ordinary human ancestors should not be meant.

To sum up then, although the word ποινή recurs in a number of contexts, five in all, relating to the afterlife, and has therefore been seen as representing a consistent and significant concept, it is used in normal Greek to cover a wide range of meanings and does not appear to have the same meaning in all these instances.

It most probably means a penalty for one's own misdeeds in (i), a discharge from the cycle of reincarnation in (ii), the recompense due to the hindering daimons to neutralise them in (iii), and perhaps the whole cycle of reincarnation in (iv); we do not know what it means in (v). Except in (v), there is no mention of and nothing that could plausibly link to the Titans, as is also the case with other references to punishments and crimes (vi, vii, ix). Where ancestors are mentioned, they are clearly human ones (vii), and other allusions to the Titans are not connected (viii).

There is much that remains unexplained. As I have observed, we are never actually told why the punishments of imprisonment in the body, or indeed of those exacted by Pindar's judge below the earth, are incurred. We have seen, however, no reason to doubt that they are due to the normal wrongdoing of the human subjects themselves.

There are also the crimes of their human ancestors whose guilt they inherit, a recurrent theme in classical Greece recently analysed by Gagné.[162] Already in Solon, 'But one pays the penalty immediately, another later, and those who escape themselves, and the doom of the gods does not overtake, it certainly

[162] Gagné 2013.

comes again; the innocent pay, either the children or the subsequent family.' (ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν αὐτίκ' ἔτεισεν, ὁ δ' ὕστερον· οἳ δὲ φύγωσιν / αὐτοί, μηδὲ θεῶν μοῖρ' ἐπιοῦσα κίχηι, / ἦλυθε πάντως αὖτις· ἀναίτιοι ἔργα τίνουσιν / ἢ παῖδες τούτων ἢ γένος ἐξοπίσω, fr. 13.29-32). Although the idea seems to have owed some of its popularity to its adoption by the tragedians as a kind of literary trope,[163] it was certainly well established by the fourth century, when, for example, orators could speak of those punished 'for their ancestors' faults' (διὰ τὰ τῶν προγόνων ἁμαρτήματα, [Lys.] 6.20) and of a 'punishment deferred to their children' (εἰς τοὺς παῖδας ἀναβληθήσεσθαι τὰς τιμωρίας, Isoc. *Bus.* 25).[164] We have seen similar remarks in Plato (vii above).

[163] Gagné 2013: 344-51.

[164] Isocrates is contrasting the Egyptians, who do not believe this, with the Greeks who do; Gagné 2013: 465.

8: Conclusion

There are six sources for the theory of metempsychosis in the classical period before Plato. Pythagoras was early associated with the idea, but it is difficult to disentangle what he might have believed from the later accretion of legend and Neopythagorean speculation. Parmenides and Empedocles also subscribed to the doctrine, but the remarks of Parmenides are too brief to be very enlightening, and in Empedocles metempsychosis is bound up with his idiosyncratic theory of the cosmic cycle of Love and Strife. We have also brief references in Pindar, in Herodotus, wrongly attributing the idea to the Egyptians, and in a gold leaf, all difficult to interpret. It is clear that we are not dealing with a consistent system common to these six sources, as there are major differences in such matters as its extension to plants as well as animals, whether reincarnation was random or went in a prescribed cycle, the time periods involved and whether the process was a direct one or interspersed with periods in the traditional Hades.

The idea that human beings are judged in the afterlife, of which there is little trace in earlier times, seems to have been fairly well established by the fifth and fourth centuries BC, as we find it in Aeschylus, Aristophanes and Demosthenes; it is combined with metempsychosis in Pindar. In Plato, however, it takes centre stage, as a chief motive behind Plato's myths of the afterlife, including those involving metempsychosis, is to support his case for living a good and virtuous life, which requires that humans should be punished or rewarded as appropriate. It is not clear that Plato actually believed that this was anything more than a salutary fable; certainly, he appears to have invented the details in his different accounts, and it is unlikely that he knew much more about metempsychosis as a religious doctrine than we do.

It was not usually supposed that people could remember their previous lives; Pythagoras may be an exception, but this is possibly later legend. Plato's account of anamnesis seems to be using metempsychosis as a kind of rhetorical device to support a characteristically Platonic theory. There is a difference of view as to whether humans are ever released from reincarnation: apparently so in Pindar and perhaps Empedocles, but not in Pythagoras and Herodotus. Only in a single gold leaf do we find a close association between release and the concept of reincarnation as a cycle.

For the idea of the body as the tomb of the soul, apart from a passing remark in Aristotle and some Pythagorean references which may be later inventions, we are dependent on Plato. Analysis of the main source in the *Cratylus* shows that he took the idea from 'Orpheus and those around him'; the various etymologies he suggests for it are his own, as probably is the variant of the body as prison. The Euripidean paradox that life is death and death life is very likely not connected. It is difficult to see, however, how the body as tomb of the soul can be combined with metempsychosis.

This concept of the body as a tomb is frequently linked with the idea that humans are being punished in this life. A connection has also been made with the term ποινή, which occurs twice in Pindar, in the Derveni Papyrus, in one of the gold leaves and in the Gurôb Papyrus. An explanation has been offered based on the Orphic myth of the murder of Dionysus by the Titans, from which mankind has inherited a guilt they need to expiate. However, there is no clear evidence of this in the classical period, and the term ποινή appears to bear different meanings in the instances cited. The only guilt involved seems to be that incurred by the subject's own wrongdoing, or that of his human ancestors.

We finally need to consider if there is any link between these ideas and private initiation offering a better fate in the afterlife.[165] We saw that metempsychosis does not necessarily involve a release from the cycle, which would be an essential component of this. There are two significant allusions in Plato. In the *Meno*, the doctrine that the soul dies and is born again, but never perishes, is ascribed to men and women learned in divine matters (ἀνδρῶν τε καὶ γυναικῶν σοφῶν περὶ τὰ θεῖα πράγματα, 81a = *OF*424, 666), comprising poets such as Pindar and 'those of the priests and priestesses who have taken the trouble to give the reason for what they practise' (τῶν ἱερέων τε καὶ τῶν ἱερειῶν ὅσοις μεμέληκε περὶ ὧν μεταχειρίζονται λόγον οἵοις τ᾽ εἶναι διδόναι, 81a-b). Although this does not actually specify private practitioners, metempsychosis was not a part of any known public cult. Also, the language strongly recalls the strictures of the Derveni Papyrus (col. XX) against those who perform the rites without explaining what they are doing, and are described as professionals (παρὰ τοῦ τέχνην ποιουμένου τὰ ἱερά) contrasted with those concerned with the public rites in cities (πόλεσιν ἐπιτέλεσαντες). In the *Laws,* too, he refers to the punishment of those who return here again from Hades (πάλιν ἀφικομένοις δεῦρο, 870d = *OF*433) as something heard from 'those who consider such things seriously in the rites' (τῶν ἐν ταῖς τελεταῖς περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐσπουδακότων, 870d), again seeming to distinguish them from more ignorant practitioners.

Plato also says that the doctrine that humans are in a φρουρά is something taught in secret (ἐν ἀπορρήτοις, *Phd.* 62b = *OF*429, 669), and contrasts those initiated (ἐτελοῦντο τῶν τελετῶν, μυούμενοι, *Phdr.* 250b-c) with those

[165] Burkert 1972: 126, Casadesús 2011: 294-6, Huffman 2013: 244-6, Betegh 2014: 154-5, Palmer 2014: 204-5. Lloyd-Jones 1985: 255 points out some Pindaric references to τελεταί (fr. 131a, *Ol.* 3.41), but these are not necessarily connected with metempsychosis.

entombed and imprisoned in the body.[166] Aristotle says that they say in the τελεταί (καθάπερ φασὶν οἱ τὰς τελετὰς λέγοντες, fr. 60 Rose = *OF*430) that humans are all formed for punishment (ἐπὶ τιμωρίᾳ πάντες). Most interestingly, there is a comment by Xenocrates on Plato's use of φρουρά: he says it is 'Titanic and culminates in Dionysus' (Τιτανική ἐστιν καὶ εἰς Διόνυσον ἀποκορυφοῦται, fr. 219 = *OF*38).[167] As noted above, this is likely to refer to their prison in Tartarus (Hes. *Th.* 717-814), but the appearance of Dionysus is difficult to explain, and may plausibly be a reference to Dionysiac initiation.

I shall suggest below[168] that initiation may also be involved in the Derveni Papyrus and the in the gold leaves.

To sum up, then, we are not dealing with either a widespread or a systematic doctrine, nor with one associated with any particular group. The belief was an uncommon one, and the details not consistent between those who did hold it; in particular, they did not agree on whether a release from the cycle of reincarnation was possible. The myths of Plato, the most extensive body of evidence, in fact tell us very little about his sources. The idea of the body as the tomb or prison of the soul, with the associated concept of this life as a punishment, may not be connected. The term ποινή, sometimes seen as the key to all this, has different meanings in the few instances it appears in this context, and cannot be proved to have any link with the later Orphic myth of the Titans. Although metempsychosis was not always associated with private

[166] The characterisation as the most blessed (μακαριωτάτην) of mysteries and the vocabulary (μυούμενοι, ἐποπτεύοντες), however, here suggests he has Eleusis in mind.

[167] Strachan 1970: 218-20.

[168] Chapter Eight.

initiation rites offering a release from the cycle, it certainly seems to have been so in some cases, as was also the body as a tomb.

The picture, then, is not one of a single secret underground doctrine, but rather of a number of ideas in circulation, being picked up by different people and being developed by them in different ways. These people included the private religious practitioners we examined in an earlier chapter.

Chapter Six

Daimons and Erinyes

1: Introduction

In the next two chapters, I want to examine four different sources, the Pythagorean Notebooks, the *lex sacra* of Selinous, the funerary gold leaves and the Derveni Papyrus, and to argue that in fact they have a great deal in common in their view of the afterlife. One of these common elements is the role of supernatural beings who are sometimes called daimons and Erinyes. To show this, it is first necessary to analyse what is normally meant by these terms in other sources of the classical period.

The usage of the term daimon in the classical period was various and not precisely defined. I shall start with what seems to be its original meaning of a lesser divine being, and then focus on three significant characteristics that it subsequently acquired: the notion of daimons as souls of the dead, the concept of a personal daimon for each of us and the idea of bad and hostile

daimons. In each case, I want to bring out what has perhaps been overlooked, or at least not emphasised, namely the fact all of these uses of the term, though grounded in earlier ideas, were comparatively late developments that only appear in our sources in their full form in the fourth century. Although precise dating is impossible, this will be relevant to our discussion in the next chapter.

The Erinyes are often thought to be primarily concerned with murder of blood kin, but I hope to show that this is not their basic function, but rather a literary construct of the tragic poets, which may make the role that we shall see them playing in the afterlife more comprehensible. Finally, it is also necessary to discuss the Eumenides, as they are usually identified with the Erinyes, I think rightly.

2: Daimon as lesser divine being

Fig. 10. Winged daimon

Collection of Classical Antiquities at the Altes Museum, Berlin: Mythological figure of a winged daemon pictured in Corinthian plate (digital restoration)}. By Korinthischer_Teller_mit_geflügeltem_Dämon_.JPG: Photographer: Marcus Cyronderivative work: Excalibursword - This file was derived from: Korinthischer Teller mit geflügeltem Dämon.JPG:, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19929754

A daimon (*Fig. 10*) in general usage was some kind of divine being, especially one of lesser status than an actual god.[1] The term could occasionally be used of the gods themselves, as when Homer says of Aphrodite ἦρχε δὲ δαίμων (*Il.* 3.420), or the gold leaves refer to 'the gods and other daimons' (θεοὶ καὶ δαίμονες ἄλλοι, A2-3).[2] Homer also uses the term for a god or divine power

[1] For general surveys, see Burkert 1985: 179-81, Algra 2009: 361-2, Sfameni Gasparro 2015.

[2] This might, however, be taken as a compressed way of saying 'the gods and the other divine powers, the daimons'.

that the speaker cannot identify: 'a daimon was devising ill' (κακὰ μήδετο δαίμων, *Od.* 12.295), 'a daimon misled me' (παρά μ' ἤπαφε δαίμων, *Od.* 14.488). In Hesiod or his continuator the offspring of a goddess and a mortal man, 'like to the gods' (θεοῖς ἐπιείκελα, *Th.* 968), could be called a daimon (*Th.* 991). Socrates in Xenophon calls the unseen power of the gods τὸ δαιμόνιον (*Mem.* 4.3.14). Plato ranks the daimons between the gods and the heroes (*Leg.* 717b), and in the *Symposium* he calls Eros a δαίμων μέγας (202d) and asserts that all daimons belong between gods and mortals (πᾶν τὸ δαιμόνιον μεταξύ ἐστι θεοῦ τε καὶ θνητοῦ, 202d-e), with a special responsibility for interpreting humans to gods and gods to humans through divination and ritual (202e-203a).

In the Academy after Plato, their intermediate status was reflected in their physical location. The *Epinomis* ascribed to Plato calls them a race of the air, δαίμονας, ἀέριον δὲ γένος (984e), immediately below the stars, with which we can connect the references of the Academician Xenocrates to invisible sublunary daimons (ὑποσελήνους δαίμονας ἀοράτους, fr. 213 Isnardi Parente = fr. 15 Heinze) and to great and powerful beings surrounding us (εἶναι φύσεις ἐν τῷ περιέχοντι μεγάλας μὲν καὶ ἰσχυράς, Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 361c).[3]

An alternative and probably older conception of daimons below the earth is seen in the one case where a daimon received cult: the *agathos daimon*, or good daimon, was represented in the form of a snake, and sometimes holding a cornucopia, and so as a wealth-producing chthonic spirit.[4] It was invoked

[3] On the questions surrounding Xenocrates' view of daimons, see Detienne 1958, 1963, Schibli 1993. Similar views are ascribed to the Persian magi by Diogenes Laertius: 'they say the air is full of images which flowing out by exhalation penetrate the eyes of the clear-sighted' (ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰδώλων πλήρη εἶναι τὸν ἀέρα, κατ' ἀπόρροιαν ὑπ' ἀναθυμιάσεως εἰσκρινομένων ταῖς ὄψεσι τῶν ὀξυδερκῶν, D.L. 1.7). Cf. Apul. *De deo Soc.* 8, *quin in eo quoque aeria animalia gignerentur*.

[4] Burkert 1985: 180, Parker 2005: 421-2.

when unmixed wine was served at a meal (ὅταν ἄκρατος οἶνος ἐπιδιδῶται, προσεπιλέγειν ἀγαθοῦ δαίμονος, Diod. 4.3.4).[5] I shall not be discussing this further, as it is not relevant to the present study.

In general, however, it is clear that the concept of the daimon as an intermediate being, or *Zwischenwesen*,[6] was persistent throughout the classical period. There are parallels from other cultures, such as Egypt and Mesopotamia.[7]

[5] Cf. Ar. *Eq.* 85, *Vesp.* 525.

[6] Sonik 2013: 103-4.

[7] Egypt: Lucarelli 2011: 109-12; Mesopotamia: Sonik 2013: 109-14, Verderame 2013.

3: Daimon as soul of the dead

The first trace of the notion of daimons as souls of the dead is in Hesiod, whose gold race become daimons after death:

> αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ τοῦτο γένος κατὰ γαῖα κάλυψεν,
> τοὶ μὲν δαίμονές εἰσι Διὸς μεγάλου διὰ βουλάς
> ἐσθλοί, ἐπιχθόνιοι, φύλακες θνητῶν ἀμθρώπων,[8]
>
> (*Op.* 121-3)
>
> But when earth covered up this race, they are now daimons through the counsel of great Zeus, noble, upon the earth, guardians of mortal men

Though this only applies to a vanished race of superior beings, it may have suggested a more general application. Though they are under the earth (κατὰ γαῖα κάλυψεν), they are also on it (ἐπιχθόνιοι), which may just reflect conventional epic diction,[9] or may reflect a certain confusion as to the location of daimons in general.

There are a number of examples from the poets of those distinguished in life becoming daimons after death: Phaethon (δαίμονα δῖον, Hes. *Th.* 991), Ganymede (μιν ἔθηκεν δαίμονα, *Th.* 1346-7), Darius (δαίμονα Δαρεῖον, Aesch. *Pers.* 620-1), Alcestis (νῦν δ' ἔστι μάκαιρα δαίμων, Eur. *Alc.* 1003), Rhesus (ἀνθρωποδαίμων[10] κείσεται, [Eur.] *Rhes.* 971 = *OF*548). They are all exceptional people: Phaethon the son of a goddess seized by Aphrodite,

[8] I follow West's text for this disputed passage; see discussion in West 1978 *ad loc*. The variants are not significant for my purpose.

[9] E.g. κατὰ γαῖα καλύπτοι, *Il.* 6.464; ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπιχθονίοισιν, *Od.* 8.479.

[10] On the oxymoron ἀνθρωποδαίμων ('human divine being'), a hapax before the Byzantines, see Plichon 2001: 20, Liapis 2012 *ad loc.* I take it to mean just a human who has become divine, the paradoxical expression perhaps an indication of the rarity of the situation.

Ganymede taken to Olympus by Zeus, Darius a great king, Alcestis who gave her life for her husband and Rhesus the son of a Muse. I think that what is suggested is a kind of quasi-divinity rather than anything that would apply to ordinary mortals.

The significant change appears in Plato. In the *Cratylus* he cites Hesiod on the golden race and goes on to say 'I therefore too hold to be a daimon every man who is good, living and dead, and rightly to be called a daimon'.[11] In the *Republic* he speaks of men exceptional for goodness in their life (ὅσσοι ἄν διαφερόντως ἐν τῷ βίῳ ἀγαθοὶ, 469b), who have daimonic or divine qualities (τοὺς δαιμονίους τε καὶ θείους, 469a) and whose graves should be honoured as for a daimon (ὡς δαιμόνων, οὕτω θεραπεύσομέν τε καὶ προσκυνήσομεν αὐτῶν τὰς θήκας, 469a-b). As daimons do not normally have graves, this might suggest that he is assimilating them to heroes, for whom grave cults were well established.[12] Although Plato thus greatly extends the scope of post-mortem daimon status, we seem still to be talking about exceptional cases.

For the Stoics, however, this could be the normal situation: 'if souls persist, they become the same as daimons' (εἰ οὖν διαμένουσιν αἱ ψυχαί, δαίμοσιν αἱ αὐταὶ γίνονται, Sext. Emp. *Math.* 9.74).[13] There was indeed a question whether all souls survived death, at least until the next conflagration, as Cleanthes thought, or only the virtuous, as Chrysippus held.[14] Heroes were defined as the surviving souls of the good (καὶ ἥρωας τὰς ὑπολελειμμένας τῶν

[11] ταύτῃ οὖν τίθεμαι καὶ ἐγὼ τὸν δαήμονα πάντ᾽ ἄνδρα ὃς ἂν ἀγαθὸς ᾖ, δαιμόνιον εἶναι καὶ ζῶντα καὶ τελευτήσαντα, καὶ ὀρθῶς 'δαίμονα' καλεῖσθαι, 389c.

[12] Burkert 1985:203-8.

[13] Megino Rodríguez 2019: 37-42.

[14] Κλεάνθης μὲν οὖν πάσας ἐπιδιαμένειν μέχρι τῆς ἐκπυρώσεως, Χρυσίππος δὲ τὰς τῶν σοφῶν μόνον, D.L. 7.157; Algra 2009: 371.

σπουδαίων ψυχάς, D.L. 7.151).[15] Plutarch also refers to souls becoming daimons through virtue (δι' ἀρετὴν ψυχῆς γενόμενοι δαίμονες, *De gen.* 593e).[16]

Before the fourth century, therefore, only the super-human in some sense, the gold race, heroes and the like, became daimons after death. From Plato on this became normal for ordinary humans, at least for the good ones.

[15] Kalaitzi has shown that Macedonian tombstones have increasingly frequent heroising aspects from the second century BC (Kalaitzi 2016: 507-9).

[16] Detienne 1963: 107-8, who ascribes this view to the Pythagoreans.

4: Personal daimon

The idea of a personal daimon for each of us is put most clearly by the Stoic Epictetus: Zeus 'has placed by each person a steward, their daimon, to whom he has committed the guardianship of the man, one who never sleeps and is never deceived'.[17] This is a kind of internal daimon; [18] in the words of Seneca, 'a holy spirit sits within us, witness and guardian of our good and bad deeds'.[19] We should, however be cautious in assuming that this Stoic concept was prevalent at an earlier period. The examples usually quoted to support an earlier use,[20] at least before Plato, which I shall now consider, are mostly just quasi-metaphors for fortune, character or the soul.

In the poets and tragedians throughout the classical period, what has been taken as a personal daimon is normally a personification of fate or fortune: 'whatever be your lot, work is best for you' (δαίμονι δ᾽ οἷος ἔησθα, τὸ ἐργάζεσθαι ἄμεινον, Hes. *Op.* 314), 'I shall honour in my mind the fortune that always attends me' (τὸν ἀμφέποντ' αἰεὶ φρασὶν δαίμον' ἀσκήσω, Pind. *Pyth.* 3.108-9), 'what mortal can boast that he was born with undamaged fortune when he hears this?' (τίς ἂν ἐξεύξαιτο βροτῶν ἀσινεῖ δαίμονι φῦναι τάδ' ἀκούων;, Aesch. *Ag.* 1341-2), 'the hard lot to which I have been yoked' (στερρόν τε τὸν ἐμὸν δαίμον' ᾧ συνεζύγην, Eur. *Andr.* 98-9), and 'for I with my own good fortune will take command of the army' (ἐγὼ γὰρ δαίμονος τοὐμοῦ

[17] ἐπίτροπον ἑκάστῳ παρέστησεν τὸν ἑκάστου δαίμονα καὶ παρέδωκεν φυλάσσειν αὐτὸν αὐτῷ καὶ τοῦτον ἀκοίμητον καὶ ἀπαραλόγιστον (*Dissertationes* 1.14.12-13).

[18] Algra 2009: 365-9.

[19] *Sacer intra nos spiritus sedet, malorum honorumque nostrorum observator et custos* (*Ep.* 41.2).

[20] For example, in KPT: 146, Ferrari 2011a: 51.

μέτα στρατηλατήσω, Eur. *Supp.* 592-3). Pindar also refers to a δαίμων γενέθλιος (*Ol.* 13.105), apparently a kind of family daimon.

In philosophy, however, a personal daimon is often the equivalent of someone's soul or character. Already in Heraclitus we have 'character is a man's daimon' (ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων, DK22B119), and Empedocles identified himself as a daimon (DK31B115 = *OF*449).[21] Plato says 'concerning the chief type of the soul with us, we have to think of it like this, that the god has given it to each one as a daimon' (τὸ δὲ δὴ περὶ τοῦ κυριωτάτου παρ᾽ ἡμῖν ψυχῆς εἴδους διανοεῖσθαι δεῖ τῇδε, ὡς ἄρα αὐτὸ δαίμονα θεὸς ἑκάστῳ δέδωκεν, *Ti.* 90a). Aristotle quotes a saying of Xenocrates, that 'fortunate is he who has a virtuous soul, for this is the daimon of each one' (εὐδαίμονα εἶναι τὸν τὴν ψυχὴν ἔχοντα σπουδαίαν· ταύτην γὰρ ἑκάστου εἶναι δαίμονα, *Top.* 112a).[22]

In none of these cases do we have the idea of a daimon that is both a separate being and allotted to watch over us. In Plato, however, we do have such a being. In the *Phaedo* the dead soul is led to judgment by a psychopomp who is 'the daimon of each to whom they had been allotted in life' (ὁ ἑκάστου δαίμων, ὅσπερ ζῶντα εἰλήχει, 107d), and in the myth of Er in the *Republic*, the reborn souls are allotted a similar being by Lachesis: 'she sent with each the daimon they had chosen as guardian of their life and fulfiller of their choice' (ἐκείνην δ᾽ ἑκάστῳ ὃν εἵλετο δαίμονα, τοῦτον φύλακα συμπέμπειν τοῦ βίου καὶ ἀποπληρωτὴν τῶν αἱρεθέντων, 620d-e). Plato's philosophical myths are, however, very idiosyncratic, and there is no evidence that this was a general conception, either among philosophers or among the general public. It may therefore be that Plato originated this idea, combining the daimon as soul as

[21] Wright 1995: 69-76.

[22] The same idea still in Marcus Aurelius: ὁ δαίμων ... ὁ ἑκάστου νοῦς καὶ λόγος (5.27).

described above with Hesiod's myth of the deceased golden race becoming daimons and guardians of mankind in general (φύλακες θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων, *Op.* 123), and that he in turn was a source for the Stoics. The divine voice (δαιμόνιον ... φωνή, *Ap.* 31d) that spoke to Socrates to stop him doing what he should not, although δαιμόνιον rather than an actual δαίμων, and peculiar to Socrates rather than universal (*Resp.* 496c),[23] will have influenced the development of the concept.

The same idea seems to be present in Menander: 'a daimon stands by every man as soon as he is born, a good mystagogue of his life' (ἅπαντι δαίμων ἀνδρὶ συμπαρίσταται εὐθὺς γενομένωι μυσταγωγὸς τοῦ βίου ἀγαθός, fr. 714). The term μυσταγωγὸς does not, I think, imply that this is specific to initiates, for we are told it applies to everyone, but is simply a metaphor from the Eleusinian mysteries, where every initiate (μύστης) had a μυσταγωγὸς as a kind of sponsor[24] who would lead him to a better life as would Menander's daimon.

The evidence for a personal guardian daimon on the Stoic model in classical times is in fact limited to the idiosyncratic myths of Plato and to Menander. Again, as we saw with the dead as daimons, it seems that an idea that is first originated in a speculative manner by Plato, perhaps rooted in the earlier concepts of the daimon as fortune or character, has been taken up and become standard.

[23] Also in Xenophon, e.g. *Mem.* 1.1.2.

[24] Mylonas 1961: 237.

5: Bad daimons

So far, the daimons we have been considering have been generally beneficent and good: semi-divinities, guardians of mankind in general or in particular, and the souls of the eminent and virtuous. Philo, translating Greek concepts into Jewish terms, was able to consider them the equivalent of biblical angels.[25] The cases of daimon meaning fortune or character are more ambiguous, but they are not by nature hostile to humans.[26] A medical writer does refer to those afflicted with imaginary terrors, who 'think they see daimons hostile to them' (ὀρῆν δοκέειν δαίμονάς τινας ἐφ᾽ ἑωυτῶν δυσμενέας, Hippoc. *De virginum morbis* VIII 466 Littré), but I am not aware of other instances from the classical period.

By the time of Plutarch and Porphyry, however, this has changed, and we hear of daimons that are bad (φαῦλος), working evil (κακοεργός), perverse (δυστράπελος) or villainous (μοχθηρός).[27] There is admittedly no consensus on why some daimons are bad: Pseudo-Plutarch thinks they are the souls of bad people (ἀγαθοὺς μὲν τὰς ἀγαθὰς κακοὺς δὲ τὰς φαύλας, *Placita philosophorum* 882b), while Porphyry says the general opinion is that they become angry through being neglected (χολωθεῖεν ἐπὶ τῷ παρορᾶσθαι, *Abst.* 2.37), though he himself thinks it is because they are overcome by the

[25] 'Those other philosophers usually call daimons, Moses calls angels; they are souls flying through the air' (οὓς ἄλλοι φιλόσοφοι δαίμονας, ἀγγέλους Μωυσῆς εἴωθεν ὀνομάζειν· ψυχαὶ δ' εἰσὶ κατὰ τὸν ἀέρα πετόμεναι, *De gigantibus* 6).

[26] Examples of the daimon as evil fortune or character are 'another daimon turning to evil' (δαίμων δ' ἕτερος ἐς κακὸν τρέψαις, Pind. *Pyth.* 3.34-5), 'the thrice-fattened daimon of the race' (τὸν τριπάχυιον δαίμονα γέννης, Aesch. *Ag.* 1476-7).

[27] φαῦλος: Plut. *De def. or.* 417c, 419a, [Plut.] *Placita philosophorum* 882b, Porph. *Abst.* 2.36 = *OF*635; κακοεργός: Porph. *Abst.* 2.38; δυστράπελος, μοχθηρός: Plut. *De def. or.* 419a.

pneumatic substance (ὅσαι δὲ ψυχαὶ τοῦ συνεχοῦς πνεύματος οὐ κρατοῦσιν, ἀλλ' ὡς τὸ πολὺ καὶ κρατοῦνται, *Abst.* 2.38).

It has, however, long been recognised that in the passage where Plutarch introduces the idea of bad daimons he is drawing on Xenocrates as his source, which takes us back yet again to the fourth-century Academy.[28] Detienne believes that Xenocrates in turn based himself on Pythagorean sources,[29] but his evidence is weak. He argues that the existence of a bad daimon is presupposed by references to a good daimon, such as the common word εὐδαίμων, 'fortunate', Aristoxenus in discussing fortune (περὶ τύχης, fr. 41)[30] and the *Axiochos* on those who heed a δάιμων ἀγαθὸς (371c), though all of these can be classed under the usages of daimon as fortune or character that we have already examined. His other examples, the Pythagorean *Golden verses* (οἵῳ τῷ δαίμονι χρῶνται, 62), the spurious prologue of Zaleucus in Stobaeus (ἐὰν δέ τῳ παραστῇ δαίμων κακὸς, 44.20 = 4.2.19), and the Byzantine writer Lydus (δοιοὶ δαίμονές εἰσι κατ' ἀνέρα, *Mens.* 4.101) are all very late and rely on the supposition that they are here reflecting early Pythagorean sources.

Iamblichus refers in his work on the mysteries to wicked daimons, δαίμονας πονεροὺς, who are, however, unable to be an impediment (ἐμπόδιον) to the practitioner of sacred rites (οὐδὲν ἐμπόδιον γίγνεται ἀπὸ τῶν κακῶν

[28] The arguments for this are set out by Schibli 1993: 147-8, 155n54, with references to earlier work, to which I have nothing to add. Although Plutarch also mentions Plato as a source for his views (*De def. or.* 419a), there is nothing in the Platonic corpus to confirm this; Schibli 1993: 147n23. Smith 1978: 435-6 offers a diagrammatic model, but leaves the question of origins open.

[29] Detienne 1958: 276-8.

[30] Fourth-century ethics, rather than Pythagoreanism, according to Burkert 1972: 108.

πνευμάτων, *Myst.* 3.31).[31] This has been connected with the figure of Empousa.[32] Empousa appears most vividly in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, as a horrible shape-changing being who confronts Dionysus and Xanthias in the underworld: 'terrible – it becomes all kind of things – now an ox, now a mule, now a beautiful woman'.[33] In *Ecclesiazousai* 1056 the name is applied to an interfering old woman. Demosthenes says that Glaucothea, the mother of Aeschines, was called Empousa (18.130); the reason he advances for this, that she did and experienced everything (ἐκ τοῦ πάντα ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν), suggests a sexual slur based on the idea of Empousa as a shape-changer.[34] The fourth-century BC writer Idomeneus of Lampsacus says Empousa was sent by Hecate, and connects the name with ἐμποδίζειν, 'to hinder' (Ἔμπουσα δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐμποδίζειν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, fr. 17 = FGrH 338 F2). Later sources at least believe her a kind of daimon (φάσμα δαιμονιῶδες, Hsch. *s.v. Ἔμπουσα*; φάντασμα δαιμονιῶδες, schol. Ar. *Ran.* 293; τῆς δαίμονος, schol. Ap. Rhod. 3.861). We have here, therefore, as in Iamblichus, a hindering daimon, which we shall encounter again in the Derveni Papyrus (δαίμονας ἐμποδών, col. VI).

[31] πνεῦμα in the sense of δαίμων was first introduced in biblical Greek; *LSJ s.v. πνεῦμα* V.

[32] Johnston 1999: 133-5. Álvarez-Pedrosa Núñez 2011 suggests a connection with the Iranian *daena*, but the resemblance does not seem close.

[33] δεινόν· παντοδαπὸν γοῦν γίγνεται τοτὲ μέν γε βοῦς, νυνὶ δ᾽ ὀρεύς, τοτὲ δ᾽ αὖ γυνὴ ὡραιοτάτη τις, 289-91. For the suggestion that this reflects practice at Eleusis, see Brown 1991.

[34] Brown 1991: 43-4.

6: Erinyes

Fig. 11. Erinyes

Apulian red-figure krater c. 340 BC. Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe. www.theoi.com

Another kind of hostile supernatural beings is the Erinyes (*Fig. 11*). The Erinyes already appear in the Knossos Linear B tablets (*e-ri-nu*, KN Fp 1+, *e-ri-nu-we*, KN V 52+), but our first information about them comes from the dozen mentions in Homer.[35] In several cases they are referred to as a single Erinys, once described as a goddess.[36] They come from Erebus (ἐξ Ἐρέβεσφιν) under

[35] Heubeck 1986: 145-59.

[36] *Il.* 9.454, 9.571, 19.87, *Od.* 15.234 (θεὰ); Heubeck 1986: 162-3.

the earth (ὑπὸ γαῖαν),[37] and are hateful (στυγεράς)[38] and have implacable hearts (ἀμείλιχον ἦτορ).[39] They work covertly (ἠεροφοῖτις, walk in mist)[40] and cause blind infatuation (ἄτη)[41] and sterility.[42] Sometimes the motive for their actions is obscure to us, as when they make Agamemnon take Briseis from Achilles, stop the horse Xanthus speaking, and afflict Melampus with ἄτη.[43] Usually, however, their function is to take revenge, whether on oath-breakers, on Ares for deserting the Achaeans, or on Antinous for throwing a stool at Odysseus.[44]

In several cases this revenge is associated with the family: they are invoked by his father on Phoenix for sleeping with his father's mistress, by his mother on Meleager for killing his uncle, by his mother on Telemachus if he were to turn her out, by his mother on Oedipus after her suicide.[45] We are also told that the Erinyes always favour the elder child (πρεσβυτέροισιν Ἐρινύες αἰὲν ἔπονται).[46] The claim that they were primarily associated with blood kin[47] is, however, in view of the equal number of examples I quoted earlier unrelated

[37] *Il.* 9.572, 19.259.

[38] *Il.* 9.454, *Od.* 2.135, 20.78.

[39] *Il.* 9.572. They are also called δασπλῆτις (*Od.* 15.234), of uncertain meaning; see Hoekstra 1989 *ad loc.*

[40] *Il.* 9.571, 19.87.

[41] *Il.* 19.88, *Od.* 15.233.

[42] *Il.* 9.954-6.

[43] *Il.* 19.86-9, 19.418 (discussion in Johnston 1992), *Od.* 15.232-4.

[44] *Il.* 19.260, 21.412-14, *Od.* 17.475-6.

[45] *Il.* 9.453-6, 9.569-72, *Od.* 2.134-6, 11.279-80.

[46] *Il.* 15.204.

[47] Johnston 1999: 251-8.

to this, not justifiable for the Erinyes in Homer, whatever may have been the case later.

There are two cases where Homer gives us an intriguing glimpse of a further possibility. In Book 3 of the *Iliad*, Agamemnon calls as witnesses to his oath those who take vengeance on oath-breakers; the text (*Il.* 3.278-80) is disputed:[48]

> καὶ οἳ ὑπένερθε καμόντας [or καμόντες]
> ἀνθρώπους τίνυσθον ὅτις κ᾽ ἐπίορκον ὀμόσσῃ,
> ὑμεῖς μάρτυροι ἔστε,

With this should be compared the similar oath in Book 19, where Agamemnon swears by, among others, the Erinyes (Ἐρινύες, αἵ θ᾽ ὑπὸ γαῖαν ἀνθρώπους τίνυνται, ὅτις κ᾽ ἐπίορκον ὀμόσσῃ, 19.259-60); this has suggested that τίνυσθον in Book 9 may be a mistake for τίνυνται.

There are three intelligible ways of reading this:

(i) with καμόντας (accusative) and τίνυσθον (dual), the two, presumably Hades and Persephone, punish the oath-breakers after their death;

(ii) with καμόντας (accusative) and τίνυνται (plural), they, probably the Erinyes by analogy with Book 19, punish the oath-breakers after their death;

(iii) with καμόντες (nominative) and τίνυνται (plural), the dead punish the oath-breakers.

The difficulty with (i) and (ii) is that there is no evidence for punishment after death in Homer, apart from the traditional folk-tale-like cases of Tityus,

[48] Kirk 1985 *ad loc.*, on which the following discussion is based.

Tantalus and Sisyphus (*Od.* 11.576-600). It appears that vengeance comes from the underworld, not to it; if 'under earth' from the Book 19 oath (ὑπὸ γαῖαν, *Il.* 19.259) may be thought ambiguous as to whether it refers to the Erinyes or the humans, 'the Erinys heard from Erebus' (Ἐρινὺς ἔκλυεν ἐξ Ἐρέβεσφιν, *Il.* 9.571-2) is not. What seems conclusive is that later in this passage in Book 3 we are specifically told that the oath-breakers and their children will come to a bloody end and their wives be enslaved (*Il.* 3.299-301), a punishment on the living not the dead. This leaves us with reading (iii), where the dead themselves take vengeance. Also, if the analogy with the nearly identical Book 19 oath holds, they do so in the guise of the Erinyes.[49]

One other passage may be relevant to this. In Book 20 of the *Odyssey* Penelope tells how the orphaned Pandareid maidens were showered with gifts by the gods and about to be married, when they were, for what reason is not clear, snatched by the Harpies who 'gave them to the hateful Erinyes as attendants' (καὶ ῥ' ἔδοσαν στυγερῇσιν ἐρινύσιν ἀμφιπολεύειν, 20.78). The verb ἀμφιπολεύειν seems to imply they became some kind of assistants, as in Hesiod, where the Erinyes themselves assist at the birth of Horkos the bane of oath-breakers (φασιν Ἐρινύας ἀμφιπολεύειν Ὅρκον γεινόμενον, *Op.* 803-4), and Johnston has suggested that they should be classed with the ἄωροι who die prematurely before marriage and become a threat to the living.[50] Here again there is an implication that the Erinyes are recruited from the dead.

The occasional classical references to the Erinyes outside Homer and tragedy do not add much to the picture: Rhea invokes them on Kronos for his

[49] Rohde 1925: 178-9 also suggested that the Erinyes were the dead, though he connected this with their role in revenging murder, which as we have seen is not their primary function in Homer.

[50] Johnston 1999: 228-31.

treatment of his father and sons,[51] and they are behind the fraternal strife in Thebes.[52] In most cases there is no connection to family and the blood kin: they are born from earth, assist at the birth of the personified Oath, punish oath-breakers and keep the sun within its limits.[53]

It is with tragedy that they move into a leading role, and here the link with murder in the family is almost universal.[54] Their most frequent association is of course with Orestes,[55] but they are also prominent in the Theban saga,[56] and occasionally appear with Heracles, Ajax and Medea.[57] They are vividly and memorably portrayed as 'many-footed and many-handed' (πολύπους καὶ πολύχειρ, Soph. *El.* 489), 'thickly entwined with snakes' (πεπλεκτανημέναι πυκνοῖς δράκουσιν, Aesch. *Cho.* 1049-50); they 'snore with repulsive breath and drip foul drops from their eyes' (ῥέγκουσι δ' οὐ πλατοῖσι φυσιάμασιν· ἐκ δ' ὀμμάτων λείβουσι δυσφιλῆ λίβα, Aesch. *Cho.* 53-4) and will 'roll you like a wheel in maddened wandering' (τροχηλατήσουσ' ἐμμανῆ πλανώμενον, Eur. *El.* 1253).

I should like, however, to suggest that our familiarity with the striking images of tragedy may have skewed our view of the Erinyes. It seems to me arguable

[51] Hes. *Th.* 472.

[52] *Thebais* fr.2, Pind. *Ol.* 2.41, Hdt. 4.149.

[53] Hes. *Th.* 184-5 (other theogonies at Epimenid. frr. 7,19, Bacchyl. fr. 24), *Op.* 803-4, Alc. fr. 129.13-14, Heraclit. DK22B94.

[54] The number of references to the Erinyes in the three tragedians greatly outweighs the number of references elsewhere in the classical period. I cite only a few examples below.

[55] E.g. Aesch. *Ag.* 1432-3, *Cho.* 1048-54, *Eum.* 46-59 and *passim*; Soph. *El.* 110-16; Eur. *El.* 1252-3, *IT* 78-81, *Or.* 37-8.

[56] E.g. Aesch. *Sept.* 695-701 and *passim*; Eur. *Phoen.* 1502-4.

[57] E.g. Soph. *Trach.* 807-9 (Heracles), *Aj.* 835-44 (Ajax, an instance unconnected with the family); Eur. *Med.* 1389-90 (Medea).

that they were adopted by Aeschylus simply as a literary device, and taken over by the others from him as a by now traditional part of the story. Gagné has described a similar phenomenon in the case of ancestral fault, which does not appear to feature prominently in previous myth, but seems rather to have been introduced by the tragedians as a kind of literary trope.[58] Their supposed close association with blood kin murder, which as we have seen is not strongly marked in the earlier sources, would then be a function of our reliance on tragedy for our portrayal of the Erinyes, and the more open picture we get from Homer probably a truer reflection of their role in popular belief, at any rate before this in turn became influenced by the tragedies.

In one case in tragedy, there is again the implication that the Erinyes might be the dead. In the *Seven against Thebes*, Aeschylus refers to the 'revered shade of Oedipus, the black Erinys' (πότνια τ' Οἰδίπου σκιά, μέλαιν' Ἐρινύς, 978-9, and similarly 886-7, πατρὸς Οἰδιπόδα πότνι' Ἐρινὺς). It is difficult to interpret this in any other way than that the dead Oedipus has become one of the Erinyes.[59] I shall discuss the relationship between daimons, the Erinyes and the dead more fully in the succeeding chapters.

[58] Gagné 2013: 344-51.

[59] Johnston objects that this is just poetry, and that the ghosts of males would not become female spirits (Johnston 1999: 274), but we know too little about the matter to be sure of this.

7: Eumenides

In the *Eumenides* of Aeschylus, the Erinyes are transformed into the Eumenides, and this is often assumed to be just another name for them, their more propitiatory equivalent, although this connection cannot be traced before Aeschylus.[60] They did receive cult,[61] which was not normal for the Erinyes,[62] and were specially connected with agrarian fertility, human reproduction, heroes, Zeus Meilichios and the world of the dead.[63] In Athens they were known as the Semnai Theai.[64]

The equation of the Erinyes and the Eumenides is certainly accepted by Euripides, who unusually calls his maddening goddesses of vengeance Eumenides (*Or.* 37, 321, 836). It is implied by Sophocles, who says of them 'the people here would call them the all-seeing Eumenides, but elsewhere other names are approved' (τὰς πάνθ᾽ ὁρώσας Εὐμενίδας ὅ γ᾽ ἐνθάδ᾽ ἂν εἴποι λεώς νιν: ἄλλα δ᾽ ἀλλαχοῦ καλά, *OC* 42-3); this may refer to the Semnai Theai, but the reluctance to specify the alternative name suggests something more unpleasant. The equation is also accepted by the fourth-century orator Dinarchus: 'so too they call the Erinyes Eumenides' (οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὰς Ἐρινύας Εὐμενίδας λέγουσιν, *Or.* 6 fr. 7*). We can conclude that whether or not the identification originated with Aeschylus, it was generally accepted by the

[60] Johnston 1999: 272-3.

[61] Paus. 2.11.4, 7.25.1, 7.25.7, 8.34.1-3.

[62] But see Hdt. 4.149 for Sparta, Paus. 8.25 for Demeter Erinyes; Henrichs 1994: 37-9, Johnston 1999: 270, Piano 2016: 98n59, and for wineless libations to propitiate the Erinyes, Chapter Seven section 5 below.

[63] Henrichs 1984: 263.

[64] Paus. 1.28.6; Parker 2005: 102, 406,442.

fourth century. Janko has suggested a possible connection between the Eumenides and the dead, when Plato says the souls of the dead are naturally well-disposed (εὐμενεῖς) towards those who respect them (τὰς τῶν κεκμηκότων ψυχάς, αἷς ἐστιν ἐν τῇ φύσει ... τιμῶσίν τε αὐτοὺς εὐμενεῖς, *Leg.* 927b),[65] but this is perhaps not conclusive.

[65] Janko 2008: 46.

8: Conclusion

It is clear that daimons are basically divine, or semi-divine, beings of various kinds. It certainly is the case, as is generally accepted, that they eventually acquired the additional roles of souls of the dead, of personal daimons attached to each human, and of bad and hostile spirits. Our chronological analysis of the references to these, however, has thrown up the interesting conclusion that there is really only evidence for these developed roles from the fourth century, in particular in Plato and the early Academy.

Before Plato, we have only the special cases of daimons as souls of the dead in the Hesiodic gold race and in the elevation to semi-divine status of a few eminent individuals. From Plato on this applies to good ordinary mortals, a concept fully developed in the Stoics. Again, the personal daimon before Plato is really only a kind of metaphorical expression for fortune or lot in the poets and for character or soul in the philosophers. The crucial step to a separate tutelary being comes with Plato, and is again extended by the Stoics. Finally, the bad or wicked daimon seems to have been introduced by one of Plato's successors, Xenocrates, at least as far as our admittedly somewhat inadequate evidence goes. The Empousa is more difficult to date, but seems to form a precedent for the hindering daimons.

Interpreting the significance of these changes is not easy, but I hope to show in the following chapters that they are concepts that lie behind the sources I shall be discussing and may be part of changes in the conceptualisation of the afterlife that took place at a broadly similar time.

Our examination of the sources for the Erinyes has suggested that our usual view of them as primarily avengers of crime in the blood-kin is in fact a product

of our reliance on the literary devices of the tragedians, and that actually their scope as revengers and enforcers was much wider, covering oath-breakers and a variety of other things, even including throwing stools at beggars. There should consequently be no surprise in seeing them take a prominent role in enforcing arrangements in the afterlife. We have also found three possible references (*Il.* 3.278-80, *Od.* 20.78, Aesch. *Sept.* 978-9), all difficult to interpret, to the revenging Erinyes as the dead,[66] a topic we shall consider further below.[67] The Eumenides appears to be another name for the Erinyes.

[66] Compare also Chrysippus on Pindar, *Ol.* 2.57-8, θανόντων ... ποινὰς ἔτεισαν, which he interprets as 'pay a penalty at the hands of the dead' (Long 1948: 32-4). θανόντων for ὑπὸ θανόντων does not seem to be possible Greek, but it is interesting that Chrysippus thought it a plausible reading.

[67] Chapter Eight section 8.

Chapter Seven

Four sources for the afterlife

1: Introduction

I want in this and the following chapter to put forward the thesis that there is evidence in a number of scattered sources for a picture of the afterlife in classical Greece that differed significantly from that in conventional polis religion, at least excluding the Eleusinian mysteries. It involved the survival of the soul after death, a division between those with a better and a worse fate after death, enforced by hostile daimons, and an initiation cult to neutralise the daimons and secure for its adherents the better outcome.

The four sources that I shall be considering are the Pythagorean Notebooks transmitted by Alexander Polyhistor, the *lex sacra* of Selinous, the funerary gold leaves of the B type and the Derveni Papyrus. Although scholarly studies of each individual source have from time to time alluded to the others as comparative evidence, they have not previously been studied together as a group. I am certainly not suggesting that these four disparate sources represent a single cult or give a mutually consistent picture in every respect. What I do hope to show is that despite the differences in detail and

terminology, there were distinctive elements common to all four. I believe that this common structure can be plausibly linked to, and indeed underlies, the activities of the private initiators.

In order to do this, I need to examine the four sources both individually and comparatively. In this chapter, I shall look at each of them in turn, to describe their nature, clear up preliminary issues of their interpretation and set the elements that I intend to pick out in context. In the next chapter, I shall present a comparative treatment of the four, bringing together the evidence they provide for their common elements.

2: The Pythagorean Notebooks

The Pythagorean Notebooks[1] come to us at third hand.[2] Diogenes Laertius, in his probably third century AD *Lives* of the philosophers, quotes extensively (8.25-33) in his life of Pythagoras from a work called the *Successions of philosophers* by Alexander Polyhistor ('polymath') of Miletus, who worked in Rome in the first century BC. He in turn says he is quoting from the otherwise unknown[3] Pythagorean Notebooks (φησὶ δ' ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος ἐν ταῖς τῶν φιλοσόφων διαδοχαῖς καὶ ταῦτα εὑρηκέναι ἐν Πυθαγορικοῖς ὑπομνήμασιν, 8.24).

Their content is very varied. They cover among other things the origin of everything from the monad and indefinite dyad, the theory of opposites, a geocentric astronomy, three kinds of aether, embryology, a tripartite division of the soul that is not the same as Plato's and ritual precepts and taboos. Some of this is not paralleled elsewhere, and they do not seem to align in general either with what is known of early Pythagoreanism or with later Pythagorean pseudepigrapha.

This has made them very difficult to date. Alexander Polyhistor in the first century BC provides a terminus *ante quem.* Wellmann and Delatte thought they provided evidence for early Pythagoreanism, but Festugière, comparing

[1] ὑπομνήματα can also be translated as Notes, Memoirs or Commentaries.

[2] For general surveys, see Wellmann 1919, Delatte 1922, Festugière 1945, Laks 2013 (summarised in Laks 2014: 370-7), Long 2013.

[3] The occasional references to ὑπομνηματα in the later sources (e.g. Iambl. *VP* 157) do not seem connected. See, however, Burkert 1972: 459n63 on a possible connection with the spurious *Letter of Lysis*, with Laks 2013: 372n6 (where *Letter to Lysis* should be *Letter of Lysis*).

their doctrines with Plato and fourth century BC medical writers such as Diocles of Carystos, concluded that they could not be earlier than the late fourth century.[4] Laks believes them to be a mixture of theories of various periods, of which some, such the ritual precepts and the doctrine of opposites, may well go back to the early followers of Pythagoras.[5] Kahn thinks the Notebooks probably originate in an otherwise unattested Hellenistic Pythagorean community,[6] while Long suggests that they are an elaborate literary forgery by Alexander Polyhistor himself.[7] It is of course quite possible that both Alexander and Diogenes made changes, for example in terminology, when reproducing their source. I think that there is no doubt that they are eclectic, combining doctrines from a number of sources, including medical writers and the Academy, but I see no way of more precisely dating what they say of the soul and afterlife, which is what I am concerned with here.

The Notebooks' doctrine of soul (D.L. 8.28-32) is in fact an original one, at least as far as our knowledge goes. Soul is not possessed by all living things, for example plants,[8] but, for those that have it, it is a detached part of the immortal aether: 'soul is distinct from life; it is immortal, since that from which it is detached is immortal' (διαφέρειν τε ψυχὴν ζωῆς: ἀθάνατόν τ᾽ εἶναι αὐτήν, ἐπειδήπερ καὶ τὸ ἀφ᾽ οὗ ἀπέσπασται ἀθάνατόν ἐστι, 8.28).[9] They therefore

[4] Wellmann 1919, Delatte 1922, Festugière 1945.

[5] Laks 2013: 374-6.

[6] Kahn 2001: 83.

[7] Long 2013: 159, following an alternative proposal of Kahn (Kahn 2001: 83n31).

[8] I follow here the interpretation of Long 2013: 153.

[9] On the Stoic use of ἀπόσπασμα see Long and Sedley 1987: 2.321; the Stoic terminology may be due to Alexander or Diogenes.

differ from Plato (*Ti.* 77b) and Aristotle (*De. An.* 414a) in denying soul to plants, and from the Stoics in giving it immortality.[10]

The soul is divided by them into three parts: *thumos*, located in the heart, *nous* and *phrenes*, which are both in the brain (8.30); *thumos* and *nous* are mortal and possessed by all animals, but *phrenes*[11] are peculiar to man and immortal. This classification is unique to the Notebooks, and is certainly not Platonic or neo-Pythagorean; *phrenes* is not normally given a higher rank than *nous*.[12] Philolaus has a slightly similar division, but with different names and distribution;[13] the *Letter of Lysis* (Iambl. *VP* 77) thinks of the *phrenes* (here presumably 'diaphragm') as the seat of the soul, rather than part of it.[14]

The soul, says the Notebooks, is nourished by the blood, its bonds (δεσμά) are veins, arteries and sinews, and its *logoi* (perhaps 'principles') are winds, as they, like the soul and the aether, are invisible (8.30-1). I shall refer later to another possible connection with winds.[15] When the soul is cast (ἐκριφθεῖσαν) on the earth it wanders in the air like the body (πλάζεσθαι ἐν τῷ ἀέρι ὁμοίαν τῷ σώματι) (8.31). This must, it seems to me, refer to the

[10] τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν γενετήν τε καὶ φθαρτὴν λέγουσιν, Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 15.20.6; Long 2013: 153.

[11] 'Diaphragm' or 'mind'; obviously the latter here.

[12] Delatte 1922: 222-3 compares a number of classifications.

[13] *Nous*, the highest faculty, in the head, *psyche* and *aisthesis* in the heart: κεφαλὰ μὲν νόου, καρδία δὲ ψυχᾶς καὶ αἰσθήσιος, DK44B13.

[14] A late medical writer (Anon. Lond., 2nd century AD) does identify the *phrenes* with the reasoning part of the soul (τὸ λογιστικὸν μέρος τῆς ψυχῆς); quoted in Festugière 1945: 44-5.

[15] Section 3 below and Chapter Eight section 2.

dead.[16] In fact, the whole air is full of souls (εἶναι τε πάντα τὸν ἀέρα ψυχῶν ἔμπλεον), called daimons and heroes, who send humans[17] dreams, omens, signs of disease and purifications (8.32). There is finally a very interesting statement (8.31) concerning what happens to souls after death:

> τὸν δ᾽ Ἑρμῆν ταμίαν εἶναι τῶν ψυχῶν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πομπαῖον λέγεσθαι καὶ πυλαῖον καὶ χθόνιον, ἐπειδήπερ οὗτος εἰσπέμπει ἀπὸ τῶν σωμάτων τὰς ψυχὰς ἀπό τε γῆς καὶ ἐκ θαλάττης: καὶ ἄγεσθαι τὰς μὲν καθαρὰς ἐπὶ τὸν ὕψιστον, τὰς δ᾽ ἀκαθάρτους μήτ᾽ ἐκείναις πελάζειν μήτ᾽ ἀλλήλαις, δεῖσθαι δ᾽ ἐν ἀρρήκτοις δεσμοῖς ὑπ᾽ Ἐρινύων.
>
> (D.L. 8.31)
>
> Hermes is the steward of souls, and for that reason is called Escort and Gatekeeper and of the Underworld, since it is he who brings in the souls from their bodies from land and sea. The pure are led into the uppermost region, but the impure cannot approach them or each other, but are bound in unbreakable bonds by the Erinyes.

Hermes as psychopomp and keeper of the boundary between the living and the dead is familiar from the second *nekyia* in the *Odyssey* (24.1-14), where he leads the souls of the suitors down to Hades, and from elsewhere.[18] The questions raised by the rest of the passage I shall discuss in the next chapter. At the moment, I just want to emphasise that these are the views of some unknown person or group of unknown date, but before the first century BC; whether they actually identified themselves as Pythagoreans is also impossible to determine, and not, for my purposes, really important.

[16] Delatte 1922: 223 would confine this to the βιαιοθάνατοι who died through violence, citing *Aen.* 6.433, describing suicides in the underworld, and Lucian *Philops.* 29, a ghost story. I do not see any evidence for this here.

[17] Also sent to sheep and cattle, which Detienne 1963: 32-7 believes indicates an origin in a small agricultural community, but nowhere in ancient Greece was very far from the farm.

[18] Delatte 1922: 225; Burkert 1985: 157-8.

There is no direct evidence for the involvement of the private initiators here, though I shall argue in the following chapter that the terms used in the Notebooks for pure and impure (καθαρὰς, ἀκαθάρτους) may in fact mean initiated and uninitiated in this context.[19] The alternative would be that simply the actions or religious observances of human beings during their life led, according to the Notebooks, to their separation after death into two exclusive and unalterable (ἀρρήκτοις δεσμοῖς) classes with apparently very different fates. I shall try to show that the Notebooks in fact share with other sources unequivocally connected to initiation a common deep structure in their conception of the afterlife, a structure which underlies the whole rationale of initiation.

[19] Chapter Eight section 3.

3: The *lex sacra* of Selinous

A large lead tablet discovered in Selinous in Sicily, formerly in the Getty Museum and now in the Museo Civico Selinunte, contains a set of religious regulations dating from the mid-fifth century BC.[20] It has conventionally been called a *lex sacra* or sacred law, a vague term covering a wide and disparate range of prescriptive religious documents.[21] Two parts are of interest for our purposes.

> [A8-16] τõι Εὐμενεῖ θύ[ε]ϙ [καὶ] / ταῖς Εὐμενίδεσι : τέλεον, καὶ τõι Διὶ : τôι Μιλιχίοι τõι : ἐν Μύϲϙο : τέλεον : τοῖς Τρ-/[10]ιτοπατρεῦσι · τοῖς · μιαροῖς hόσπερ τοῖς hερόεσι, ϝοῖνον hυπολhεί-/ψας · δι’ ὀρόφο · καὶ τᾶν μοιρᾶν · τᾶν ἐνάταν · κατακα-/ίεν · μίαν. θυόντο θῦμα : καῖ καταγιζόντο hοῖς hοσία · καὶ περιρά-/ναντες καταλινάντο : κἔπειτα : τοῖς κ<α>θαροῖς : τέλεον θυόντο : μελίκρατα hυπο-/λείβον · καὶ τράπεζαν καὶ κλίναν κἐνβαλέτο καθαρὸν hἔμα καὶ στεφά-/[15]νοϲ ἐλαίας καὶ μελίκρατα ἐν καιναῖς ποτερίδε̣[c]ι καὶ : πλάϲματα καὶ κρᾶ κάπ-/απξάμενοι κατακαάντο καὶ καταλινάντο τὰϲ ποτερίδας ἐνθέντες.
>
> To Zeus Eumenes [and] the Eumenides sacrifice a full-grown (sheep), and to Zeus Meilichios in the (plot) of Myskos a full-grown (sheep). (Sacrifice) to the Tritopatores, the impure, as (one sacrifices) to the heroes, having poured a libation of wine down through the roof, and of the ninth parts burn one. Let those to whom it is permitted perform sacrifice and consecrate, and having performed aspersion let them perform the anointing, and then let them sacrifice a full-grown (sheep) to the pure (Tritopatores). Pouring down a libation of honey mixture, (let him set out) both a table and a couch, and let him put on (them) a pure cloth and crowns of olive and honey mixture in new

[20] Edited by Jameson, Jordan and Kotansky 1993 (hereafter JJK). See also Ianucci, Muccioli and Zaccarini 2015.

[21] Sokolowski 1962, Carbon and Pirenne-Delforge 2012, Carbon 2015: 167.

> cups and cakes and meat; and having made offerings let them burn (them), and let them perform the anointing having put the cups in.

The major question raised by this passage is that of the identity of the Tritopatores, and as the traditional interpretation has recently been disputed, it will be necessary to consider the matter in some detail. Evidence for their cult, all from the fifth and fourth centuries BC, comes primarily from Athens, but also from Delos, Troizen and Kyrene as well as here.[22] Mainly consisting of boundary stones and sacrificial calendars, it gives little indication of the Tritopatores' nature. In Kyrene, they appear in a provision of the *lex sacra* concerning purity; unfortunately, it is not at all clear what it means, or if its mention of pure and profane provides a parallel to the pure and impure Tritopatores in Selinous.[23]

The fullest literary source is Harpocration (*s.v.* Τριτοπάτορες = *OF*802):[24]

> Δήμων ἐν τῇ Ἀτθίδι φησὶν ἀνέμους εἶναι τοὺς Τριτοπάτορας· Φιλόχορος δὲ τοὺς Τριτοπάτορας πάντων γεγονέναι πρώτους· τὴν μὲν γὰρ γῆν καὶ τὸν ἥλιον, φησὶν, ὃν καὶ Ἀπόλλωνα καλεῖν, γονεῖς αὐτῶν ἡπίσταντο οἱ τότε ἄνθρωποι, τοὺς δὲ ἐκ τούτων τρίτους πατέρας. Φανόδημος δὲ ἐν ς' φησὶν ὅτι μόνοι Ἀθηναῖοι θύουσί τε καὶ εὔχονται αὐτοῖς ὑπὲρ γενέσεως παίδων, ὅταν γαμεῖν μέλλωσιν· ἐν δὲ τῷ Ὀρφέως Φυσικῷ ὀνομάζεσθαι τοὺς Τριτοπάτορας Ἀμαλκείδην καὶ Πρωτοκλέα καὶ Πρωτοκρέοντα, θυρωροὺς καὶ φύλακας

[22] Summarised in JJK: 107-11.

[23] [§ 5.] [21] Ἃ κα μαντίων ὁαία πανῖ καὶ ἀγνῶι καὶ βαβάλῳ[ι], | πλὰν ἀπ' ἀνθρώπω Βάττω τῶ {τω} ἀρχαγέτα καὶ | Τριτοπατέρων καὶ ἀπὸ Ὀνυμάστω τῶ Δελφῶι, | ἀπ' ἄλλω, ὀπῆ ἄνθρωπος ἔκαμε, οὐκ ὁσία ἀγνῶ[ι], ‖ [25] τῶν δὲ ἰαρῶν ὁαία παντί. | (Kyrene. *Lex sacra SEG* ix.72, Rhodes-Osborne 2003 97, Buck 1955 115) 'Right to participate is granted to anyone, either pure or profane, with regard to Akamanties. Except in the case of the man Battus the founder and the Tritopateres and in the case of Onymastus the Delphian, in the case of any other man that has died there is no right to participate for a pure man; but in the case of the sacred ones, there is a right to participate for anyone.' Discussion: Parker 1983: 336-9, JJK: 111n36.

[24] Copied by the *Suda* and *Etymologicum magnum* and the basis for the entries of Hesychius and Photius. Texts of this and the other literary sources are given in Gagné 2007: 2-4.

> ὄντας τῶν ἀνέμων· ὁ δὲ τὸ Ἐξηγητικὸν ποιήσας Οὐρανοῦ καὶ Γῆς φησιν αὐτοὺς εἶναι, ὀνόματα δὲ αὐτῶν Κόττον, Βριάρεων καὶ Γύγην.
>
> Demon in the Atthis says the Tritopatores are winds [*FGrHist* 327 F2], but Philochorus the first of all to have come into being, for he says that people then understood the earth and the sun, which they also called Apollo, to be their progenitors, and those born of them the third fathers [*FGrHist* 328 F12]. Phanodemus in the sixth book says that the Athenians alone sacrificed and prayed to them for procreation when they were about to marry [*FGrHist* 325 F6]. In the *Physics* of Orpheus the Tritopatores are called Amalkeides and Protokles and Protokreon, being doorkeepers and guardians of the winds. The writer of the *Exegetikon* says they were the children of Sky and Earth, and their names were Kottos, Briareus and Gyges [*FGrHist* 352 F1].

It is clear from the disagreements here that not only Harpocration in the first century AD knew little of a cult that had died out some centuries earlier, but that even the contemporary Atthidographers whom he quotes lacked reliable information. The sets of three names (the last three are the Hekatoncheires of Hesiod, *Th.* 149) sound like inventions on the assumption the name meant 'three fathers'. The connection with procreation may equally come from the name and a confusion with the enigmatic saying 'may my child be *tritogenes*, not *tritogeneia*' (παῖς μοι τριτογενὴς εἴη, μὴ τριτογένεια, schol. T *Il.* 9.39).[25] The references to the winds are less easy to explain. In addition to those in Harpocration, we also have Photius calling them children of the winds (ἀνέμων παῖδας, *s.v.* Τριτοπάτωρ = *OF*802), and a scholion to the Odyssey, where Amalkeides and Protokles and Protokreon of the Orphic poem are called masters of the winds, perhaps a gloss on doorkeepers and guardians, choosing which to confine in a bag and which to allow to blow (οὕτως οὖν ἔφασαν αὐτοὺς δεσπότας εἶναι ἀνέμων, ὡς καὶ δέειν ἀσκῷ ὃν ἂν βούλοιντο αὐτῶν, τοῦς δ' ἄλλους ἐᾶν πνεῖν, schol. P *Od.* 10.2 = *OF*802 = schol. Lycophr. 738).

[25] See Gagné 2007: 3n11 for the many contradictory ancient explanations of this.

This is not quite the same as saying that the Tritopatores are themselves winds, as Demon does.[26]

They are, however described in several places as ancestors. Hesychius calls them 'founders of the race, forefathers' (γενέσεως ἀρχηγούς. οἱ δὲ τοὺς προπατέρας, *s.v.* Τριτοπάτερας), the *Lexica Segueriana* suggests 'third from the father, that is great-grandfather' (τρίτους ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρός, ὅ πέρ ἐστι προπάππους, *s.v.* Τριτοπάτορες, Anecd. Bekk. 307, 16), and Pollux says 'the father of the grandfather or grandmother is the great-grandfather, so Isocrates; perhaps this is what Aristotle calls the Tritopator' (ὁ δὲ πάππου ἢ τήθης πατὴρ πρόπαππος, ὡς Ἰσοκράτης· τάχα δ' ἂν τοῦτον τριτοπάτορα Ἀριστοτέλης καλοῖ, 3.17-18 = Arist. fr. 415 Rose). The idea seems to be that the third fathers are the fathers of the fathers of the fathers, or great-grandfathers, and so by extension ancestors in general.[27] This identification has been generally accepted,[28] and I shall follow it here.

Robertson, however, has recently published a substantial study of the *leges sacrae* of Selinous and Kyrene which takes a very different view of the Tritopatores.[29] He believes them to have nothing to do with ancestors, but to be wind gods, worshipped for their fertilising power. As we have seen, there is indeed a strong connection with winds in the sources. I believe that Robertson's arguments are unsound and his theory mistaken, but as it is essential to my use of the Selinous evidence that the Tritopatores are

[26] For scepticism regarding attempts to link this with procreation through the supposed generative power of winds, see Gagné 2007: 5-6.

[27] Rohde 1925: 203-4n123.

[28] So Farnell 1921: 343-60, JJK: 112, Clinton 1996:172, Johnston 1999: 51-2, Parker 2005: 31-2, Bendlin 2006, Gagné 2007: 1-2. Robertson 2010: 168, although disagreeing, concedes that it is 'a definition endorsed by many and disputed by none'.

[29] Robertson 2010: 167-84.

ancestors, not wind gods, it will be necessary to undertake a critical examination of what he puts forward. His chief arguments are these:

(i) *The Tritopatores were worshipped alongside agrarian deities.*[30] This is doubtless the case, but is not surprising in a largely agrarian society, and hardly proves that they were fertility gods, let alone wind gods.

(ii) *They are associated with the Akamantes, which must mean 'untiring' and so must be winds.*[31] This is in the Kyrene inscription quoted above, and also in an inscription from Marathon (*SEG* 50.168 *IG* II^2 1358). This is possible; the winds Notos and Boreas are called ἀκάμαντος by Sophocles (*Tr.* 112-13). The word and its synonym ἀκάματος were, however, applied to many other things apart from winds (*LSJ s.vv.*), the reading in Kyrene is uncertain, the juxtaposition in Marathon may be accidental and the alternative meaning 'not dead' instead of 'untiring' has also been suggested.[32]

(iii) *In one case (deme of Erchia, SEG 21.541), the sacrifice follows that for Leukaspis, 'white shield', and a buffeting wind is like a hoplite pressing on the enemy with his shield.*[33] This is flimsy in the extreme.

(iv) *Undoubted wind gods are worshipped with offerings in* bothroi, *underground installations, just like the Tritopatores.*[34] The only evidence I know for this is from Corinth, where there was an altar to the winds (βωμός ἐστιν ἀνέμων) and a priest performed an annual sacrifice involving four pits

[30] Robertson 2010: 172-4.

[31] Robertson 2010: 172-3.

[32] Parker 1983: 336-7.

[33] Robertson 2010: 173-4; inscription at JJK: 108-9.

[34] Robertson 2010: 175.

(βόθρους) (Paus. 2.12.1), together with a *bothros* in the Athenian Agora which Hampe has suggested is connected with a wind cult.[35] Robertson gives no references, except to Hampe. Neither is there any mention of underground installations in connection with the Tritopatores except at Selinous, and there it is made explicit that we are dealing with a roofed structure ('having poured a libation of wine down through the roof', ϝοῖνον ηυπολησίψας · δι' ὀρόφο), not an open pit.

(v) *The quotation from Philochorus refers to winds, not ancestors, and means that earth and sun were the source of all life, and winds were produced from them, and so third, speaking inclusively, after them.*[36] According to Harpocration (above), 'Philochorus [called them] the first of all to have come into being, for he says that people then understood the earth and the sun, which they also called Apollo, to be their progenitors, and those born of them the third fathers.' This does not mention winds, and does mention ancestors. I do not understand what he means by third speaking inclusively. Greeks normally counted both the beginning and end of a sequence, so a penteteric, 'five year', festival took place every four years, but this does not seem to apply at all here.

(vi) *They were prayed to for procreation because of the fertilising power of winds, a worldwide belief exemplified at Athens by the myth of Boreas and Oreithyia.*[37] He provides no further evidence for the belief in fertilising winds in the Greek world at this time. Gagné's analysis has shown that it was at first confined to a few instances, specifically mares and birds, and to philosophical

[35] Hampe 1967: 18-22.

[36] Robertson 2010: 175-6.

[37] Robertson 2010: 175, 180-4.

circles, and did not become a general belief until late antiquity.[38] The north wind Boreas married Oreithyia the daughter of Erechtheus, who produced twins, but this is not much evidence for his general fertilising power. I have suggested above that the prayer for procreation alluded to by Phanodemos may be due to a confusion with *tritogeneia.* The fact is that we do not know the reason for this prayer to the Tritopatores.

(vii) *The* Exegetikon *says they are warders of winds with the names of Hesiod's Hekatoncheires, who are warders of windy Tartarus and are elemental forces who fling rocks from their hundred hands, and so represent strong winds.*[39] As I read Harpocration, the claim that they are warders (φύλακας) applies only to the preceding citation from the Orphic *Physics*, and not to the *Exegetikon*. Hesiod's Tartarus is windy (πρὸ θύελλα θυέλλης, *Th.* 742), though Homer's is not (οὔτ' ἀνέμοισι, *Il.* 8.481). That the Hundred-handers represent winds is an ingenious conjecture, but is certainly not made explicit by Hesiod. There seems to be a confusion between the winds and their warders; Kottos, Briareus and Gyges are indeed in Hesiod warders set by Zeus over Tartarus (φύλακες πιστοὶ, *Th.* 735), but winds can surely not be themselves the warders of winds.

(viii) *Tritopatreis means 'having third fathers' (or second fathers, counting inclusively), not 'being third fathers'.*[40] Τριτοπατρεῖς is the form preferred by Robertson; Τριτοπάτερες at Kyrene, which he admits would not bear his meaning, is 'no doubt a misunderstanding'. He offers no explanation of what

[38] Gagné 2007: 5-6.

[39] Robertson 2010: 177-9.

[40] Robertson 2010: 179-80.

'having third (or second) fathers' might mean (but see (ix) below). Again, I do not understand his 'inclusive' counting.

(ix) *Wind gods are insistently characterised as sons-in-law, so Tritopatores means having the father-in-law as third father, the others being the father and grandfather.*[41] Boreas, destroying the Persian fleet (Hdt. 7.189), is indeed described as the son-in-law of Athens (τὸν Βορέην γαμβρὸν εἶναι), as he had married the daughter of Erechtheus. His other examples of this 'insistent' characterisation are Phineus being the son-in-law of Boreas (Ap. Rhod. 2.234-9), where in fact the wind is actually the father-in-law, and the Hundred-hander Briareus marrying the daughter of Poseidon (Hes. *Th.* 817-19), which is only relevant if you accept Robertson's doubtful identification of the Hekatoncheires as winds ((vii) above). The consequent explanation of the term Tritopatores does not sound plausible; it is not clear who the father and grandfather of the winds would be in this scenario, no parallels to such a usage are given and it contradicts the explanation given in (v) above.

Wind gods that we know about in fact look very different to the Tritopatores.[42] They comprise: (a) the Olympian gods, especially Zeus but also others such as Artemis at Aulis in Aeschylus,[43] (b) overlapping with the previous category, cults for favourable winds such as Zeus Ourios or Euanemos, or for calming stormy winds such as the Anemokoitai in Corinth or the Heudanemoi in Athens,[44] (c) Aeolus, god of the winds in Homer, who does not seem to have

[41] Robertson 2010: 180-4.

[42] See the useful survey in Phillips 2006, on which the following analysis is based, together with Hampe 1967: 7-16.

[43] Zeus: Sol. fr. 13 17-19; Artemis: Aesch. *Ag.* 214-5.

[44] Zeus Ourios: Aesch. *Supp.* 594; Zeus Euanemos: Paus. 3.13.8; Anemokoitai: Hsch. *s.v.* ἀνεμοκοῖται; Heudanemoi: Hsch. *s.v.* Εὐδάνεμος.

received cult,[45] (d) individual winds, of which only the north wind Boreas and the west wind Zephyrus received cult,[46] (e) cults of the winds in general, which come closest to Robertson's conception.

I know only three clear examples of the latter.[47] The Lacedaimonians sacrifice a horse to the winds on Mount Taygetus, burn it, and let the ashes scatter in the wind (Festus, *s.v. October equus*). In Corinth, a priest sacrifices on an altar of the winds once a year and performs rites in four pits (Paus. 2.12.1); this is thought by Pausanias to be to calm the winds. In Arcadia, they sacrifice to thunder, lightning and storm winds (θυέλλαις, Paus. 8.29.1). None of this sounds much like the Tritopatores of Selinous. None appear to have anything to do with fertility. None of them feature distinctively named and characterised wind gods, but just refer to the winds in general.

I do not think, therefore, that Robertson has provided any convincing evidence that the Tritopatores are wind gods, nor has he put forward any plausible explanation of the name. Though it certainly seems that they have some connection with the winds, a point I shall return to in the next chapter, it must be remembered that they are mostly referred to as children, warders or masters of the winds; only Demon says they are winds themselves. The traditional identification as ancestors, if not certain, is much more plausible, and it is the one I shall adopt.

Returning to the Selinous text, the Tritopatores receive sacrifice 'as to the heroes' (ὁσπερ τοῖς ηερόεσι). The Tritopatores therefore dwell underground,

[45] *Od.* 10.21.

[46] Boreas: Paus. 8.36.6; Zephyrus: Paus. 1.37.2; see also *PMG* 858, a Spartan paean to Eurus, with Burkert 1985: 175.

[47] But see also Hampe 1967: 18-22 on the possible role of a *bothros* in the Athenian agora in a wind cult.

like the dead heroes.[48] This is confirmed by the fact that the libations are poured down (ηυπολείβω)[49] into the ground for them, of wine for the impure, honey mixture for the pure. In the first case, it is specified that they are poured through the roof, which suggests some low roofed structure, and that may well apply in the second case, whether it is a second structure or the same one. Parallels for this are limited. The Phocians poured blood through a hole into the grave of a local hero (Paus. 10.4.10).[50] There is a low cylindrical structure on Delos, not however roofed, inscribed Τριτοπάτωρ (*IDélos* I 66), which may be comparable.[51] The pure Tritopatores also receive theoxenia, entertaining the gods to a meal.[52]

The most striking feature of this ritual is the division of the Tritopatores into what are usually translated as 'pure' (καθαροῖς) and 'impure', 'foul' or 'polluted' (μιαροῖς). This, however, raises wider questions, and can best be dealt with in relation to all four of my sources in the next chapter.

The second extract from the Selinous *lex sacra* can be dealt with at less length. It is from column B.

> [B] [2-3]..ἄṿθ̣ρ̣ọṇọc [6-7] ..τ.[.(?)ἑλ]ακτ̣ἑ̣ρον ἀποκα[θαίρεcθ]./[αι], προειπὸν ηόπο κα λε̃ι̣ κ̣αὶ τõ ρ̣ἑ̣[τ]ε̣ος ηόπο κα λε̃ι καὶ [τõ μενὸc] / ηοπείο κα λε̃ι καῖ <τα̃ι> ἀμέραι ηοπείαι κα λ<ε̃>ι, π{ο}ροειπὸν ηόπυι κα λε̃ι, καθαιρέcθ̣ọ, [3-4? ηυ]-/ποδεκόμενος ἀπονίψαcθαι δότο κἀκρατίξαcθαι καῖ ηάλα τõι αὐ[τõι] / [5][κ]αὶ θύcαc τõ Δὶ χοῖρον ἐξ αὐτõ ἴτο καὶ περιcτ[ι]ραφέcθο vacat/ καῖ ποταγορέcθο καὶ cῖτον ηαιρέcθο καὶ καθευδέτο ηόπε ̣κ-/α λε̃ι αἴ τίc κα λε̃ι

[48] For hero cult see Rohde 1925: 115-55, Burkert 1985: 203-8, Whitley 1994: 220-22, Ekroth 2015; discussion of the Selinous evidence by Scullion 2000.

[49] JJK: 71n4.

[50] JJK: 31.

[51] JJK: 110, Robertson 2010: 159.

[52] JJK: 67-70.

> ξενικὸν ἔ πατρῶιον, ἔ ‘πακουστὸν ἔ ’φορατὸν / ἔ καὶ χὄντινα καθαίρεσθαι, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόποϙ ϙαθαιρέσθο / hόνπερ hοὐτορέκτας ἐπεί κ’ ἐλαστέρο ἀποκαθάρεται. vacat / [10]hιαρεῖον τέλεον ἐπὶ τõι βομõι τõι δαμασίοι θύσας καθαρὸ-/c ἔστο. διορίξας hαλὶ καὶ χρυσõι ἀπορανάμενος ἀπίτο. / hόκα τõι ἐλαστέροι ζρέζει θύεν, θύεν hόσπερ τοῖς vacat / ἀθανάτοισι. cφαζέτο δ’ ἐς γᾶν. vacat
>
> [If a ...] man [wishes] to be purified from elasteroi, having made a proclamation from wherever he wishes and whenever in the year he wishes and in whatever [month] he wishes and on whatever day he wishes, having made the proclamation withersoever (i.e., to whatever directions) he wishes, let him purify himself. [And on] receiving (him, i.e. the elasteros), let him give (water) to wash with and a meal and salt to this same one, and having sacrificed a piglet to Zeus, let him go out from it, and let him turn around; and let him be addressed, and take food for himself and sleep wherever he wishes. If anyone wishes to purify himself, with respect to a foreign or ancestral one (sc. elasteros), either one that has been heard or one that has been seen, or anyone at all, let him purify himself in the same way as the autorrektas (homicide?) does when he is purified of an elasteros. Having sacrificed a full-grown (sheep) on the public altar, let him be pure. Having marked a boundary with salt and having performed aspersion with a golden (vessel), let him go away. Whenever one needs to sacrifice to the elasteros, sacrifice as to the immortals. But let him slaughter (the victim so that the blood flows) into the earth.[53]

The first question is obviously what an *elasteros* might be.[54] The term in this form and as a substantive occurs only here. There was, however, a Zeus Elasteros (Ζεὺς Ἐλάστερος) on Paros and a Zeus Alasteros (Ζεὺς Ἀλάστερος) on Thasos, as we know from inscriptions, though they give little clue to the significance of the epiclesis.[55] This in turn takes us to the better-known term *alastor*, defined by Hesychius as a vindictive daimon (πικρὸς δαίμων, *s.v.* ἀλάστωρ), and familiar from numerous references in tragedy, such as the

[53] Translation of JJK. I shall deal with disputed points of the translation in the discussion.

[54] The following is largely based on JJK: 116-20. I discuss Robertson’s dissenting view below. See also Salvo 2012: 136-42.

[55] JJK: 116-18.

'ancient harsh alastor' (παλαιὸς δριμὺς ἀλάστωρ, Aesch. *Ag.* 1501) that incarnates in Clytemnestra to revenge the sins of Atreus. The term is one that could be used both for the sinner and the avenger.[56]

At Selinous, we find that an *elasteros* could also afflict an *autorektas* (αὐτορέκτας),[57] another new term which might be translated 'doer by one's own hand', and seems similar to words like αὐτοφόνος and αὐθέντης which mean 'killer'.[58] As the subject at Selinous has to act in the same way as the *autorektas* (hόνπερ hοὐτορέκτας, B9), he cannot himself be a homicide.

We can, therefore, identify the *elasteros* as an avenging daimon, afflicting the guilty. There is a parallel in the *hikesios* at Kyrene, particularly the third type, for a murderer (αὐτοφόνος), for which purification is also required, so it may be that the two terms refer to the same being.[59] The purification is through theoxenia, inviting the *elasteros* to a meal, and sacrifice; the blood from the sacrifice is to flow into the earth, marking the *elasteros* as a chthonic figure of

[56] 'Guilty murderers, those that are polluted, or great sinners' (παλαμναῖοι, οἱ μιάσμασιν ἐνεχόμενοι. ἢ οἱ μεγάλα ἁμαρτάνοντες, Hsch. *s.v.* ἀλάστορες); Parker 1983: 107-11.

[57] Clinton 1996: 175-6, reading αὐ[τορέκται] for αὐ[τῶι] in B4, thinks the first part of the B column also refers to an *autorektas*, and that in B3-4 it is not the victim receiving the *elasteros* in a theoxenia, but the victim's host, as purifier, receiving the victim. Whether or not this is so, there is no doubt from B9 that an *elasteros* might afflict an *autorektas.*

[58] Parker 1983: 351, JJK: 44-5. Robertson's suggestion that the word means that the sacrificer butchered the animal personally, instead of using a professional butcher (Robertson 2010: 225-8), does not fit the context well, and is not supported by any parallels for this meaning; the parallels he offers for the practice, such as the Bouphonia at Athens, seem to involve a community effort and are rather different.

[59] *SEG* ix.72 (Rhodes-Osborne 2003 97, Buck 1955 115); Stukey 1937, Parker 1983: 332-51, JJK: 119. Clinton, however, sees the *hikesios* as a human ghost and therefore ineligible for sacrifice like the divine *elasteros* (Clinton 1996: 179), a doubtful distinction in view of the evidence for daimons as souls of the dead presented in the previous chapter.

the underworld.[60] The *elasteros* may be either *xenikon* or *patroion* (ξενικὸν ἔ πατρῶιον). Interpretations suggested for these terms include (killers of) strangers and kin,[61] (killers of) guest-friend and family,[62] and entertained (referring to the theoxenia) and customary;[63] we have in fact no way of telling what they mean.

In view of the strong case for the *elasteros* as some kind of avenging daimon, I need deal only briefly with Robertson's view that it was actually a god of lightning, a 'frightening power of nature, itself conceived as a pollution',[64] though he gives no examples of other natural forces seen as pollutions. This lightning god, he says, is invited to a meal,[65] surely making a somewhat alarming table companion,[66] and the sacrifice τῶι ἐλαστέροι is not 'to the *elasteros*', but to Zeus 'for [i.e. to placate] the *elasteros*',[67] though no examples of this usage are given, and I am not clear why you would want to placate lightning, except in a thunderstorm. He derives the term from ἐλαύνω and gives it the meaning of 'striker',[68] which may be possible, but is not backed up by any strong evidence. This unsupported conjecture can be dismissed.

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[60] JJK: 61-76; as noted above, Clinton 1996: 175-6 thinks that purification by a host is involved, not theoxenia.

[61] JJK: 44.

[62] Clinton 1996: 178-9; see also Johnston 1999: 49.

[63] Robertson 2010: 221-2, but this would mean that the theoxenia was being explicitly identified on the inscription as a non-customary innovation. I would rather expect any innovation to be presented as something traditional.

[64] Robertson 2010: 215.

[65] Robertson 2010: 215-6.

[66] Admittedly, this might also apply to a vengeful daimon.

[67] Robertson 2010: 224-5.

[68] Robertson 2010: 232-40.

If *elasteros* is indeed derived from ἐλαύνω or its epic equivalent ἐλαστρέω, then it is significant that these terms do occur in descriptions of the Erinyes:[69] 'those of the Erinyes not persuaded by law drove me continually in unsettled courses'(ὅσαι δ᾽ Ἐρινύων οὐκ ἐπείσθησαν νόμῳ, δρόμοις ἀνιδρύτοισιν ἠλάστρουν μ᾽ ἀεί, Eur. *IT* 970-1), 'just as in the tragedies, the goddesses of vengeance drive and punish' (καθάπερ ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαις, Ποινὰς ἐλαύνειν καὶ κολάζειν, Aeschin. 1.190). The identification of *elasteroi* as vengeful daimons thus seems to present them as a variation of, or perhaps simply another term for, the Erinyes.

Again, as in the Notebooks, we hear of the pure (καθαροί) and impure, though the meaning is perhaps more difficult to determine here; we have also seen references to propitiation and what seem to be vengeful daimons. These are, however, some kind of public religious regulations, and are clearly rather different from the private initiations that we have looked at so far. I shall discuss in the next chapter how far they might share a common underlying structure.

[69] JJK: 117.

4: A funerary gold leaf

Fig. 12. Gold leaf B10

Orphic Gold Tablet (Hipponion-Museo Archeologico Statale Capialbi, Vibo Valentia). By sconosciuti - http://www.sbvibonese.vv.it/sezionec/pag249_c.aspx, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4782985

Μναμοσύνας τόδε ἔργον. ἐπεὶ ἄῳ μέλλησι θανεῖσθαι
εἰς Ἄϊδαο δόμους εὐηρέας, ἔστ’ ἐπὶ δ<ε>ξιὰ κρήνα,
πὰρ δ’ αὐτὰν ἑστακῦα λευκὰ κυπάρισ<σ>ος·
ἔνθα κατερχόμεναι ψυχαὶ νεκύων ψύχονται.
ταύτας τᾶς κράνας μηδὲ σχεδὸν ἐγγύθεν ἔλθηις.
πρόσθεν δὲ εὐρήσεις τᾶς Μναμοσύνας ἀπὸ λίμνας
ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ προρέον· φύλακες δ’ ἐπύπερθεν ἔασι.
οἵ δέ σε εἰρήσονται ἐν<ὶ> φρασὶ πευκαλίμαισι
ὅτ<τ>ι δὴ ἐξερέεις Ἄϊδος σκότος ὀρφ<ν>ήεντος.
ἔιπον· Γῆς παῖ<ς> εἰμι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος·
δίψαι δ’ εἰμ’ αὖος καὶ ἀπόλλυμαι· ἀλ<λ>ὰ δότ’ ὦ̣κ̣α̣
ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ πιέναι τῆς Μνημοσύνας ἀπὸ λίμ<ν>α̣ς̣.
καὶ δή τοι ἐρέουσιν {ι} ὑποχθονίωι βασιλεί<αι>·
καὶ {δή τοι} δώσουσι πιεῖν τᾶς Μναμοσύνας ἀπ[ὸ] λίμνας
καὶ δὴ καὶ σὺ πιὼν ὁδὸν ἔρχεα<ι> ἄν τε καὶ ἄλλοι
μύσται καὶ βάκ̣χοι ἱερὰν στείχουσι κλε<ε>ινοί.

(B10)[70]

[70] Text of Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008. Although I do not always agree with either their assumptions or their speculations, their comprehensive commentary must

> This is the work of Memory. When you are about to die [you will go] to the well-built halls of Hades. A spring is on the right, and standing by it a white cypress; there the souls of the dead go down and refresh themselves. Do not go near this spring at all. Further along you will find, from the lake of Memory, cold water flowing forth. But there are guards over it. They will ask you, with penetrating minds, what you seek in the darkness of murky Hades. Say: 'I am the son of earth and starry sky. I am parched with thirst and I perish, but give me quickly cold water to drink from the lake of Memory.' And they will indeed speak to the ruler of the underworld and will give you to drink from the lake of Memory, and you too, having drunk, will go along the sacred road that the other glorious initiates and bacchics travel.

This funerary gold leaf (*Fig. 12*) is from Hipponion in Calabria, from the cist-grave of a female, dating from around 400 BC; it was first published in 1974.[71] I have selected it as a representative of the twelve leaves of the B group with similar text as the fullest of them. It is the only one to include the final reference to initiates and bacchics. Three others are relatively full and specifically name the guards (φύλακες) before the spring;[72] the remaining eight are much shorter,[73] but include an unnamed interlocutor ('Who are you? Where are you from?', τίς δ' ἐσί; πῶ δ' ἐσί;) and the claim in response of the soul to be the child of earth and sky.

The dead person is addressed in hexameters. Though the grave seems to be that of a female, he speaks of himself as male, which might suggest that the leaf was a standard production, rather than tailor-made for this particular deceased. The text consists of instructions for the dead soul on its arrival in

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form the basis for any understanding of the text. I have also found the treatment of Johnston (Graf and Johnston 2013: 94-136) useful. On the gold leaves, see Chapter Four.

[71] Details of the burial in Edmonds 2011b: 43.

[72] B1, B2, B11, ranging from Magna Graecia to Thessaly and the fourth to the third centuries BC.

[73] Mostly late (after 200 BC) and from Crete, though including one (B9) of the fourth century BC from Thessaly.

Hades. It is to avoid the spring at which the souls normally refresh themselves and pass on to another spring, flowing from the lake of Memory. This, however, is guarded, and the soul must give the correct response, identifying itself as the child of earth and heaven, before the guards obtain permission from the king or queen of the underworld (the gender depends on the supplement chosen)[74] to let the soul drink and proceed along the sacred road travelled by the other initiates and bacchics.

The initiates and the guards will form a major topic of the next chapter, so I shall not consider them here. Questions may also occur, however, about other matters, in particular the significance of the soul's response and of the role of Memory, which I shall try to make clearer here.

The soul has to reply to the guards: 'I am the son of earth and starry sky' (Γῆς παῖς εἰμι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος). This is clearly an echo of Hesiod, who refers to the main race of gods in almost identical terms (οἱ Γῆς ἐξεγένοντο καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος, *Th.* 106). Three overlapping interpretations have been put forward:[75] that the soul is claiming to be divine, that it is claiming descent from the Titans who murdered Dionysus in the Orphic myth, and that it is claiming dual origin, an earthly and a heavenly part.

That the soul is claiming divinity is supported by beliefs such as 'gods and mortal men come from the same origin' (ὁμόθεν γεγάασι θεοὶ θνητοὶ τ' ἄνθρωποι, Hes. *Op.* 108)[76] and 'he states the common parents of all are

[74] Merkelbach's suggestion that the king or queen is the deceased his- or herself (Merkelbach 1975: 9) seems unlikely; Edmonds 2004: 87.

[75] Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 39-45. See also Edmonds 2009b, Bremmer 2016: 37-41.

[76] See West 1978 *ad loc.* Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 111-12 compares the happy fate of our initiates to that of Hesiod's golden race.

heaven and earth' (κοινοὺς ἁπάντων δείκνυσι γονεῖς οὐρανὸν καὶ γῆν, Eur. fr. 1004 Kannicht).[77] We also find in other gold leaves claims such as (to Persephone) 'I also am of your happy race' (καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ὑμῶν γένος ὄλβιον εὔχομαι εἶμεν, A1-3), which seems a convincing parallel. Statements of the type 'a god you have become from a man' (θεὸς ἐγένου ἐξ ἀνθρώπου, A4) are not altogether parallel, as they involve a change in status rather than a claim to have been divine all along.[78]

The connection with the Titans is again based on the preconception that the gold leaves must reflect the Orphic myth of their murder of Dionysus.[79] There is nothing else to recall the Titans in this passage, and the obvious objection is that a descent from the killers of the son of the underworld queen, as Dionysus is in the myth, cannot be a recommendation to her.

The third possibility, that the soul is saying that it has a mortal part, descended from earth, and a divine part, descended from heaven, should be seen in the context of the expanded version in a fourth-century leaf from Petelia (B1), which follows the standard claim of lineage from earth and starry sky with the line 'but my race is of the sky; this you know yourselves' (αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ γένος οὐράνιον· τόδε δ' ἴστε καὶ αὐτοί).[80] The 'but' (αὐτὰρ) might seem to make little sense ('I am the child of the sky but my race is of the sky'),[81] but it could

[77] Bremmer 2016: 40 also puts forward Euripides fragment 484, 'heaven and earth were a single form, but when they split from each other they gave birth to everything' (οὐρανός τε γαῖά τ' ἦν μορφὴ μία· ἐπεὶ δ' ἐχωρίσθησαν ἀλλήλων δίχα, τίκτουσι πάντα), plants, animals and humans; gods, however, are not included.

[78] See Chapter Four section 4 above.

[79] For: Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 41-2; against: Zuntz 1971: 364-7, Edmonds 2004: 75-80, Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 115.

[80] Also B9, 'but my race is of the sky', and B2, 'my name is starry' (ἀστέριος ὄνομα).

[81] Zuntz indeed takes it to be an ignorant late addition (Zuntz 1971: 366-7).

perhaps be defended as meaning 'I am the child of both earth and sky, but it is my descent from the sky that is important'.[82] In any case, whether or not the soul is alluding to a mortal, earthy, part, it seems clear that it is claiming a divine lineage.[83]

The text opens by announcing itself as the work of Memory (Μνημοσύνη),[84] and the act of drinking from the waters of Memory, only available to those who know the right spring to go to and what to say to the guards, seems an essential step in the soul's progress along the sacred road. The significance of this is not at all clear. It would be natural to assume that the soul needs memory to remember its instructions, but the sequence is wrong, as the waters of Memory are not drunk until after it has gone to the correct spring and claimed its lineage. The first spring, the one to avoid where everyone else drinks, is presumably that of Lethe, or forgetfulness, where memory is erased on death, which is well attested from other sources,[85] but in that case you might suppose that simply not drinking there would avoid this erasure, without a further drink being required.

There is another reference to Memory in the very late gold leaf of Caecilia Secundina ('accept this gift of Memory', δέχεσθε Μνημοσύνης τόδε δῶρον, A5), but this is from a different type of text, the A series, and so far removed

[82] Guthrie 195: 174, Janko 2016a: 118.

[83] Edmonds 2010: 119-21.

[84] ἔργον, 'work', is uncertain (Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 12-15), but none of the proposed alternatives are more plausible. Calame 2006: 237-8, reading ἠρίον, 'tomb', suggests that 'c'est la lamelle elle-même qui devient un tumulus métaphorique', which I do not find altogether convincing. For Janko's interpretation, see Chapter Four section 5. Whatever the actual word was, it seems clear that the importance of Memory is being stated at the commencement of the text.

[85] Pl. *Resp.* 621a-b, *IKnidos* 303.11, schol. Hom. *Od.* 11.51, Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 8.52.4, Lucian *Luct.*5; Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 30-1, Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 117, Jiménez San Cristóbal 2011.

in time (2nd or 3rd century AD) as to make doubtful evidence.[86] A spring of Memory was attached to the oracle of Trophonius in Lebadeia (ὕδατος πηγὰς ... Λήθης ... Μνημοσύνης, Paus. 9.39.7-8); the enquirer drank the waters of forgetfulness to forget everything in his mind up to then, and the waters of memory to remember what he had learned from the oracle.[87] There does not appear to be any connection with the gold leaf apart from the name.

Zuntz connected the spring of Memory with the cycles of reincarnation,[88] but it is not clear how this would be applicable here. The soul who drinks its waters seems destined not for reincarnation but for a permanent and blessed place in the afterlife, so this is nothing to do with the question of whether the reincarnated soul can remember its previous life. We would have to suppose that the act of memory in itself in some way stopped the cycle of reincarnation, and there is no clue to this in the text, or, as we have seen, in any of the other evidence on reincarnation.

Other theories have been suggested: that it was because Mnemosyne presides over the poetic function, or that she was the grandmother of Orpheus in the genealogies, or that memory is the instrument of salvation by the recall and atonement for past sins, or that it is a guarantee of immortality, or that memory of one's past life is necessary for full enjoyment of the blessed state.[89] They are speculations, poorly supported by evidence. My own suggestion is also speculative, but appears to cover the facts. I showed in an earlier chapter that there was considerable inconsistency among the gold leaves, and that this

[86] Zuntz 1971: 335; Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 134-5.

[87] Zuntz 1971: 379, Edmonds 2004: 107, Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 31.

[88] Zuntz 1971: 380-1; see also Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 32-3, Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 117-19.

[89] Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 15-19, Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 119-20.

might be taken as evidence that their authors had only an imperfect grasp of what they were writing. I suggest, therefore, that this text was the work of an incompetent *bricoleur*, who has patched together the fountain of Lethe, the waters of the *Book of the dead*, to which I shall refer in the next chapter,[90] and the concept of forgetting past lives on reincarnation without much regard to the coherency and logic of the result.[91]

We are certainly, however, dealing with initiates (μύσται), who have been supplied, presumably for a fee, with instructions allowing them to achieve a better fate in the afterlife, whether in conjunction with or as an alternative to an initiation ceremony. This is therefore another variant of the activities of the private initiators.

[90] Chapter Eight, section 6.

[91] Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 119 refers to a lack of homogeneity in beliefs and practices outside civic religion.

5: The Derveni Papyrus

Fig. 13. The Derveni Krater

Derveni Krater. Chalcidice, vers 330-320 avant Jésus Christ. Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki. By © Michael Greenhalgh - http://rubens.anu.edu.au/raider5/greece/thessaloniki/museums/archaeological/metalwork/derveni_krater/views/With full permission, transmitted to permissions@wikipedia.org, CC BY-SA 2.5, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=597597

Fig. 14. The Derveni Papyrus

Derveni Papyrus. Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki. Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1962248

In January 1962, road works about 10 kilometres north of Thessaloniki, close to the mountain pass of Derveni, uncovered a group of graves from the end of the fourth century BC, possibly forming an outlying cemetery of the ancient city of Lete. Among the many objects found there were a number, such as spear-heads and greaves, with military associations, as well as (in Tomb B) the Derveni Krater (*Fig. 13*), a bronze crater richly decorated with scenes of Dionysus.[92] Also found, among the debris of the funeral pyre covering Tomb A, was a partially carbonised papyrus roll (*Fig. 14*), clearly intended to have been burnt with the corpse, but having perhaps fallen off the pyre.[93] Following a difficult process of conservation and a prolonged process of editing, the *editio maior* was finally published in 2006.[94] It was the first papyrus to be discovered on the Greek mainland, and at that time the oldest anywhere.[95]

The surviving text consists of 26 columns[96] in the standard edition, all damaged and incomplete. Its contents can be divided into three parts. (1) Columns I-VI

[92] Ignatiadou 2014 suggests a symbolic religious significance for this. Her earliest attested case of such a usage is Plato *Ti.* 41d. There is no reason why it should not relate to a traditional symposium context.

[93] Tsantsanoglou 2014: 11-12 suggests that it may have been a passport to the underworld, of a superior kind to the gold leaves, but its length and emphasis on philosophical interpretation seem ill-adapted to this role. Most likely, it was just a valuable possession like the krater.

[94] Kouremenos, Parássoglou and Tsantsanoglou 2006 (hereafter KPT). The text and translation are by Parássoglou and Tsantsanoglou and the commentary by Kouremenos.

[95] This account is based on that of Tsantsanoglou in KPT: 1-19. See also Funghi 1997a, Betegh 2004: 56-73, Janko 2016b, Kotwick 2017: 12-23, Macfarlane and Del Mastro 2019 and Piano 2016: 5-58, who plausibly suggests that this was the tomb of a senior commander of Philip or Alexander, and draws parallels with Dionysiac and afterlife themes in other Macedonian tombs (it was, however, only later that it became common in Macedonia to regard the dead as heroes; Kalaitzi 2016: 507-9). For a comprehensive and up-to date bibliography of the papyrus see Funghi 1997b and Santamaría 2019b.

[96] Janko 2016b: 11-13 followed by Kotwick 2017 has introduced a completely different numbering of the columns, based on his calculation of the amount of text completely lost from the beginning of the document, which in turn is based on a single character in the

and XX discuss various religious practices in which the reader, and perhaps the author, of the text might be expected to take part. (2) Embedded in the other columns are about twenty-four quotations from and allusions to an old work of theogony in hexametric verse, apparently ascribed to Orpheus.[97] (3) Finally, the bulk of the text in these columns is a commentary on this theogony by the Derveni author, in which he interprets it as an allegory of a kind of pre-Socratic physics. His work, in a mixed Attic-Ionic dialect, appears to date to the late fifth century;[98] the theogony itself is significantly older. We do not know the identity either of the actual author of the theogony or of the Derveni author himself.

The main text that I want to examine here is that of column VI, in the first part of the above division. First, however, I want briefly to refer to the evidence of the preceding columns. Unfortunately, as the outer layers of the roll, they constitute the most severely damaged part of the papyrus, and often only scattered words can be made out with any confidence.[99] In order to limit the discussion to what is reasonably certain, I shall generally ignore disputed readings and supplements. It is clear, however, that there are several mentions of daimons and Erinyes.

In column III, among much that is uncertain, there seems to be the beginning of a statement that 'daimons under the earth never ...' (δ]ᾳίμονες οἱ κατὰ [γῆς

surviving papyrus, which he interprets as a stichometric mark (disputed by Piano, paper at FIEC/CA conference, London, July 2019). Even if his calculation is correct, it seems unnecessary to change the well-established KPT numbering as a referencing convention, and I shall accordingly continue to use this.

[97] The references to Orpheus as presumed author are in XVIII.2, 6.

[98] Bremmer (forthcoming) plausibly conjectures that the commentary was written in Athens, which would of course suggest that the religious practices he describes may have been Athenian also.

[99] See Appendix: The Derveni Papyrus: a note on the text.

ο]ύδ̣ἐ̣κο̣τ̣', III.6, Ferrari version),[100] followed by references to 'servants of the gods' (θ̣εῶν ὑπηρέται, III.7) and possibly also the 'unjust' (ἄ̣δικο̣ι̣,[101] III.8). It seems that these may be underworld daimons who act as servants of the gods against the unjust.[102]

The idea that col. III also contains a reference to a personal guardian daimon[103] is very doubtful, and seems a product of a preconceived idea and imaginative supplementation.[104] I have already shown[105] that the concept of a personal daimon as a separate being allotted to watch over us was not, as is often assumed, a 'widespread concept'[106] at this time, but in fact is not attested before Plato and only became common with the later Stoics. In a fifth century

[100] Ferrari 2011a: 50. Janko *ap.* Kotwick 2017, however reads οἱ] δὲ [δ]αίμονες, οἳ κατὰ [τοὺς μ]άγους τιμὰς [ἀ]ξ̣ξ̣ουσι [τῶν] θεῶν ὑπερέται δ[ίκης, '[Die] *Daimones* aber, die gemäss [den] *Magoi* als Diener des Rechts die Ehren [der] Götter vermehren' (Kotwick). Under either reading we have daimons who serve the divine, whether the gods in general or Justice in particular.

[101] Piano: ἀδίκου̣ (Piano 1916: 77, Piano 2019: 23). Not read by Janko *ap.* Kotwick 2017.

[102] Janko *ap.* Kotwick 2017 reads 'the daimons ... are great oaths' (ὅρκοι μεγάλοι εἰσίν), 'verkörperte Schwüre bezeichnet', comparing Hesiod '[the Styx] was made the great oath of the gods' (αὐτὴν μὲν γὰρ ἔθηκε θεῶν μέγαν ἔμμεναι ὅρκον, *Th.* 400). This, however, clearly means that they swore *by* the Styx, not that the Styx was an oath personified.

[103] Repeated in the commentaries by Tsantsanoglou 1997: 105, Jourdan 2003 *ad loc*, Betegh 2004: 86-7, KPT *ad loc*, Ferrari 2011a: 51-2, Bernabé 2014: 34.

[104] The relevant versions of the text of III.4 are Parássoglou/Tsantsanoglou: [δαίμ]ων γίνετα[ι ἑκά]σ̣τωι ἰᾳ̣τ̣[ρὸς (KPT), Janko: .....(.)]ων γίνετα[ι.....(.)]τιμῶσι (Janko *ap.* Kotwick 2017, similarly Janko 2008: 45), Ferrari: δαίμ]ωγ γίνετα[ι ἑκά]σ̣τωι ἴλ̣ε̣[ως (Ferrari 2011a: 50); Piano follows Ferrari, but also gives an alternative version in which this is followed by ἤ ἀλ[άστωρ (Piano 2016: 73). There is not much agreement, and the key parts are supplements.

[105] Chapter SIx section 4 above.

[106] Tsantsanoglou 1997: 105.

text such as the one we are considering it would at least be a remarkable first appearance.[107]

Erinyes are mentioned several times without any context remaining; [108] in III.5, they follow ἐξώλεας, 'pernicious (men)', which might suggest that the Erinyes are punishing them.[109] The most intriguing reference is in col. IV, where the Derveni author quotes Heraclitus (DK22B94) as saying that the sun is the width of a human foot, and if it exceeds the proper boundaries of its width (ὑπερβάλλων εἰκότας οὔρους εὔρους, IV.8), 'the Erinyes, assistants of justice, will find it out' (Ἐρινύες νιν ἐξευρήσουσι, Δίκης ἐπίκουροι, IV.9).[110] I do not know either what Heraclitus means by this or why the Derveni author is quoting him,[111] but it is clear that the Erinyes must play a significant part in the system he is outlining.[112] I shall have more to say on the Erinyes in the next chapter.

There is finally a mention of 'in the terrors of Hades' in the fifth column, which is concerned with the consultation of oracles (ἐν Ἅιδου δεινὰ V.6).[113]

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[107] Megino Rodríguez 2019: 32 also concludes that there is no reference to a personal daimon here, suggesting that guides during life would not occur in a context of the afterlife.

[108] I.6 (not Janko *ap.* Kotwick 2017), II.3 = Piano Soluzione 1 I.3 (Piano 1916: 69) (not Janko), III.3 (only Janko).

[109] Piano's apparatus for this (Piano 2016: 77) is: ἐξώλεας (vel ἐξώλεα σ[in comm.) Ts[1], KPT [οὐ μ]ἐ̣τ̣ε̣ι̣σ̣ι̣ legi et supplevi, οὐ monente Most, νουθ]ετεῖ δι' KPT, ἐξώλεα σ[ίνεται] εἰ ἔτεισ' Fe (σ[ίνεται] at longius), ἐξώλε' ἀσ[ινέ' ὃς] ἔτεισ' Fe[2], ἐκ[ὰς] coni. Most, ἔκα[στ' Fe, ἑκά[στης τῶν KPT Ἐρινύω[ν KPT, Ἐρινύσ[ι Fe

[110] Δίκης ἐπίκουροι is the usual supplement from the quotation in Plutarch *De exil.* 604a, not, however, accepted by Piano.

[111] See Kirk 1954: 284-8, Sider 1997, Jourdan 2003 *ad loc*, KPT *ad loc*.

[112] Tsantsanoglou 2014: 3 believes that the author gives them an expanded role, upgrading their function from social to cosmic, but we have already seen (Chapter 6 section 6 above) that their role was wider than usually conceived.

[113] Janko's correction of KPT's ᾖρ' to ἐν is accepted by Tsantsanoglou 2018: 15-16. For further discussion of this passage, see above Chapter One section 6.

Whatever the precise meaning of this in the context, which is problematic, it is clear that the terrors of Hades were considered real and had some significant role in what is being described.

The sixth column is fortunately much better preserved than the earlier ones, and I give it here in full.[114]

[c.8 εὐ]χ̣αὶ[115] καὶ θυσ[ί]ᾳ̣ι μ[ειλ]ί̣σ̣ῳ̣υσι τ̣ὰ̣[ς ψυχάς,][116]
ἐπ̣[ωιδὴ δ]ὲ̣ μάγων δύν[α]ται δ̣αίμονας ἐμ[ποδών]
γι̣[νομένο]υ̣ς μεθιστάν̣αι· δαίμο̣νες ἐμπο[δών δ' εἰσὶ][117]
ψ[υχαῖς ἐχθ]ρ̣οί[118]. τὴν θυσ[ία]ν̣ τούτου̣ ἕνεκε[ν] π̣[οιοῦσ]ι̣[ν]
5 οἱ μ̣ά̣[γο]ι̣, ὡ̣σ̣περεὶ ποινὴν̣ ἀποδιδόντες. τοῖ[ς] δὲ
ἱεροῖ[ς] ἐπισπένδουσιν ὕ[δω]ρ καὶ γάλα, ἐξ ὧνπερ καὶ τὰς
χοὰς ποιοῦσι. ἀνάριθμ̣α̣ [κα]ὶ̣ πολυόμφαλα τὰ πόπανα
θύουσιν, ὅτι καὶ αἱ ψυχα[ὶ ἀν]ά̣ριθμοί̣ ε̣ἰσι. μύσται
Εὐμενί̣σι προθύουσι κ[ατὰ τὰ] α̣ὐτὰ μ̣ά̣γοις· Εὐμενίδες γὰρ
10 ψυχαί ε̣ἰσιν. ὧν ἕνεκ̣[εν τὸν μέλλοντ]α θεοῖς θύειν
ὀ̣[ρ]ν̣ί̣θ̣[ε]ιον[119] πρότερον [c.11]̣ι̣ς̣π̣ο̣τ̣ε̣[. .]ται
[. . .]ω[.]τε καὶ τὸ κ̣α̣[ ]ου… [. .]̣ ι̣
εἰσὶ δὲ [. . .]̣ ι̣… [ ]τουτο̣ [
ὅσαι δὲ [
]ων ἀλλ̣[
φ̣ο̣ρ̣ου[ ]… [

(*P. Derv.,* col. VI*)*

… [prayers? libations?] and offerings appease [the souls? the (Persian) heroes?] … the incantation of the magi is able to remove/change the

[114] See Appendix: The Derveni Papyrus: a note on the text.

[115] 'prayers'; χοὴ' ('libations') Ferrari after Tsantsanoglou; [χοαὶ γάρ, εὐ]χαὶ ('libations, prayers') Bernabé, δω]ρ̣εᾳ̣ί ('gifts') Janko *ap.* Kotwick 2017.

[116] 'souls'; τὰ[ς ἀ]ρτάδ[ας ('(Persian) heroes') Ferrari.

[117] δαίμο̣νες ἐμπο[δίζουσι ὡς ('sono d'ostaculo como') Piano.

[118] 'hostile'; τιμω]ροῖ ('vengeful') Tsantsanoglou 1997: 113 *conj.*; φρου]ροί ('guarding') Tsantsanoglou 1997: 113 *conj.*; δει]νοί ('good at') Ferrari; κλητ]εοί ('called [souls]') Janko 2016b: 21; νοητ]έοι ('[als Seelen] verstanden') Janko *ap.* Kotwick 2017.

[119] 'of a bird'; φ[ο]ρ̣τ̣ίον ('burden') Janko *ap.* Kotwick 2017; φὶ̣ ῥ̣υ̣τ̣ίον ('to them a drinking-horn') Tsantsanoglou 2018: 17.

> hindering daimons; hindering daimons [hostile to? vengeful against? guarding? good at (hindering)? hinder like?] souls. For this reason, the magi make offerings, as if, as it were, paying an atonement. They pour on the offerings water and milk, from which they also make libations. The cakes they offer are countless and many-knobbed, for the souls too are countless. The initiates make preliminary offerings to the Eumenides in the same way the magi do, for the Eumenides are souls. For this reason, … sacrifice to the gods … bird first …

This fascinating text raises many difficult questions of interpretation. I shall try to deal with as many of these as possible, before going on, in the next chapter, to place it in relation to the three previous sources.

It may be helpful to begin with a summary of what seems to be occurring, before looking at individual points in more detail. There are two groups performing religious rites, initiates and magi.[120] I have already discussed the identity of the magi.[121] The magi chant incantations, make offerings of cakes and make libations of milk and water. These are connected with the souls of the dead, and at least partly directed at thwarting hindering daimons, who have some relationship with the souls. The initiates make offerings to the Eumenides, who also are souls, in a similar way.[122]

In the first line of the column, the ritual actions are appeasing some beings in a lacuna of the text, which is normally and plausibly supplemented as souls, τάς ψυχάς. Ferrari, however, has suggested τὰς ἀρτάδας, a rare word derived

[120] Obbink 1997: 51 seems to suggest that the initiates are not involved in the rites, but are only mentioned as a comparison to explain what the magi are doing, but this is not a natural way of reading the passage and as far as I am aware has not found any supporters.

[121] Chapter One section 6.

[122] I have not considered the reference to something connected with birds, ὀρνίθειον, in line 11. There is a full discussion in Piano 2016: 207-16, who suggests that they are being freed not sacrificed, and are symbols of the soul. It is probably better to admit our ignorance of what this word might mean here. Janko 2017b: 21-2, however, does not read the word at all.

from the Iranian *artavan,* 'those who possess truth', or 'heroes',[123] as an alternative, based on the supposition, which I discussed above,[124] that the magi are Iranians.[125] There is little positive evidence for this conjecture. Piano doubts that the *artavan*, which she translates as 'giusti', would be appeased rather than honoured, and points out the difficulty with the feminine form rather than the masculine ἀρταῖοι.[126] The offerings of cakes which we shall come to shortly must be made to the souls, or there would be little point in the comparison of their countless knobs to the countless souls, and it seems reasonable to suppose that the souls are being referred to here too.[127]

The offerings are made 'as if, as it were, paying an atonement' (ὡσπερεὶ ποινὴν ἀποδιδόντες, VI.5). I have already discussed the possible significance of ποινή.[128] Bernabé, again relating everything to late Orphic myth, sees here a reference to the crime of the Titans,[129] but there is nothing in the text to specifically link it to this.

Johnston has suggested that the purpose is to purge the initiands of contagious blood-guilt; although it is not credible, she admits, that they were all in fact murderers, the persuasive initiator will have convinced them that there is a strong likelihood that an ancestor or even fellow-townsman would have been,

[123] οἱ δίκαιοι, ὑπὸ μάγων, Hesych. *s..v.* ἀρτάδες; οἱ ἥρωες, παρὰ Πέρσαις, Hesych. *s.v.* ἀρταῖοι.

[124] Chapter One section 6.

[125] Ferrari 2011b: 77-9, 2014: 63-5. See also Tsantsanoglou 1997: 110n25. *Contra*: Bernabé 2014: 29.

[126] Piano 2016: 193-9.

[127] Johnston 2014: 98.

[128] Chapter Five section 7.

[129] Bernabé 2014: 45-6.

and that they had better undergo the process to be sure.[130] There is no evidence in the text to support this conjecture, which does not seem very plausible.

The rites consist of incantations, offerings of cakes and libations. The ἐπῳδαι, 'incantations',[131] of VI.2 are presumably the same as the εὐχαί, 'prayers', of VI.1, if that word can be read there (see text above). There are references elsewhere in the papyrus to something set to music (ἁρμοστοὺς τῆι μουσικῆι, II.8)[132] and to hymns (ἐν τοῖς Ὕμνοις, XXII.11).[133] Incantations at this period were generally associated with γόηται, sorcerers, rather than magi (e.g. γόης ἐπῳδὸς, 'chanting sorcerer', Eur. *Bacch.* 234).[134] Herodotus (1.132) does, however, describe the Persian magi making theogonic incantations at sacrifices,[135] which has led to the suggestion that the incantation referred to here was none other than the Orphic theogony on which the author of the Derveni Papyrus comments,[136] though it is not clear why telling a mythological story might be supposed to have an apotropaic effect on the daimons. Theopompus says that it is through the invocations of the magi that the things

[130] Johnston 2014: 99-100; see also Johnston 1999: 132-6.

[131] Tsantsantoglou 1997: 111 suggests ἔντομα, 'sacrificial victims', as an alternative, but as Jourdan 2003: 6 observes, this would not be appropriate to the bloodless offerings that are otherwise being described.

[132] This, however, is not preserved in Piano's alternatives (Piano 2016: 68-75).

[133] Obbink 1997: 48-9.

[134] For other examples, see Johnston 1999: 111.

[135] See also Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 706d on their use by Persian magi on the possessed (τοὺς δαιμονιζομένους); Bernabé 2007b: 163-4.

[136] Tsantsanoglou 1997: 111, Kotwick 2017: 140-1.

that are will endure (τὰ ὄντα ταῖς αὐτῶν ἐπικλήσεσι διαμενεῖν, *FGrH* 115 F64).[137]

I translate θύω as 'make offerings', rather than the usual 'sacrifice', as its semantic range covers not only the killing of animals, but also the offering to a divine power, or to the dead, of natural produce, food and drink.[138] Here we have cakes, πόπανα, with knobs, ὀμφαλοί, a common offering to many different divine powers.[139] Clement of Alexandria (*Protr.* 2.22 = *OF*590) includes many-knobbed cakes, πόπανα πολυόμφαλα, in his list of the contents of a mystic chest, κίστη μυστική,[140] but, as often with Clement, he is confused about which mysteries he is describing, beginning by seeming to offer an explanation of the Eleusinian mysteries, but then referring to the snake of Dionysus.[141] The reason given in the papyrus for the use of cakes, that they are countless and many-knobbed because the souls are countless (VI.7-8), seems to be an interpretation by the Derveni author himself, and cannot be regarded as the authentic reason for their presence. Like many of his interpretations of the Orphic theogony, it is not very convincing, and is perhaps best seen, as Betegh suggests, as just a vague analogy.[142]

[137] See Hicks 1925 *ad loc* for alternative texts and interpretations.

[138] E.g. ἔξελε τὸ πόπανον, ὅπως λαβοῦσα θύσω τοῖν θεοῖν, 'take out the cake, so that I can take it and offer it to the two goddesses', Ar. *Thesm.* 284-5; KPT: 170.

[139] For details, see Henrichs 1984: 260-1, Kearns 1994. Tsantsanoglou 1997: 114 compares the Iranian *frasast.* The cakes (πόπανα) are linked with preliminary offerings (προθύματα) in Aristophanes (*Plut.* 660).

[140] Jourdan 2003: 38-9.

[141] Contrary to the later claim of Eusebius (*Praep. Evang.* 2.2.64), it is very unlikely that Clement had any personal experience of the mysteries, but was instead relying on some now lost compilation; Herrero de Jáuregui 2007: 20-3, 2010: 147-9. For Clement's motives, see Jourdan 2010.

[142] Betegh 2004: 84.

The magi make wineless libations, of water and milk. If we read χοή or χοαί in VI.1 (see text above for variant readings) these are also specifically part of the appeasement, along with the offerings and incantations. There is an earlier reference in column II to libations in drops (χοαὶ σταγόσιν, II.5),[143] which is odd as libations are normally poured out on the ground.[144] Janko's different reconstruction of the earlier columns reads this as being to the Erinyes (χοαὶ σταγόσιν Ἐρινύων, III.4).[145] An unplaced fragment may also refer to wineless, νηφ[άλιος, libations.[146]

Wineless libations were frequently made in Greek religion to a wide range of Olympian and other divinities.[147] This includes the Eumenides, or Semnai Theai, where the mixture was water and honey.[148] It also includes the Erinyes.[149] In the *Eumenides* the ghost of Clytemnestra says to the chorus of Erinyes 'you have indeed licked up many of mine, wineless libations, sober propitiations',[150] and in Apollonius Rhodius, Circe 'within by the hearth was burning propitiatory cakes with wineless offerings to stop the anger of the

[143] = Piano Soluzione 1 I.5, Soluzione 2 3bis.5 (Piano 2016: 69,74).

[144] Tsantsanoglou 1997: 102.

[145] Janko 2008: 45, Janko *ap.* Kotwick 2017.

[146] I 78, KPT: 124, Bernabé 2014: 30; cf. Ferrari 2007: 203.

[147] See the survey in Henrichs 1983: 93-100. This included offerings to the winds (Ἀνέμοις), *IG* II^2 1367.19-20, but this is just one in a long list of other divine powers.

[148] Soph. *OC* 100, 158-60, 481. The scholiast on 159 links μειλιχίων, 'propitiatory', with μέλιτος, 'honeyed'. See also Callim. fr. 681, schol. Aesch. 1.188; Henrichs 1984: 258-60, Tsantsanoglou 1997: 102-3, Piano 2016: 228-31.

[149] Bernabé 2014: 30-1; Tsantsanoglou's statement (1997: 103) that no information on libations to the Erinyes has survived is wrong.

[150] ἦ πολλὰ μὲν δὴ τῶν ἐμῶν ἐλείξατε, χοάς τ᾽ ἀοίνους, νηφάλια μειλίγματα, Aesch. *Eum.* 106-7.

terrible Erinyes'.[151] Libations to the dead, however, or to heroes, were generally not wineless.[152] At Selinous, as we saw in section 3, the impure Tritopatores received wine, the pure a wineless honey mixture (μελίκρατα, A13).[153]

The incantations, offerings of cakes and wineless libations are therefore in themselves in no way exceptional in Greek religion. What might be more exceptional is what they are used for, which again raises a number of questions. Who are the hindering daimons? Whom or what are they hindering? What is it that the magi are able to do to them by their incantations? What is their relation to the other beings mentioned in the papyrus, the Erinyes, the Eumenides and the souls?

These questions will be considered in the next chapter, when I shall try to bring out what the four sources that we have just examined have in common.

It is, however, clear that we are dealing both with initiates (μύσται, VI.8) and with persons claiming religious authority (μάγοι) who take action against hostile divine beings, and apparently also are religious professionals (τέχνην ποιουμένου τὰ ἱερά, XX.4) who charge fees (τὴν δαπάνην προσανηλῶσθαι, XX.9).[154] These are therefore private initiators.

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[151] ἡ δ' εἴσω πελάνους μείλικτρά τε νηφαλίῃσιν καῖεν ἐπ' εὐχωλῇσι παρέστιος, ὄφρα χόλοιο σμερδαλέας παύσειεν Ἐρινύας, 4.712-14. Bernabé 2014: 30-1 also cites the Orphic *Argonautica* 572-5, but this is very late (perhaps 5th century AD).

[152] For examples and bibliography, see Henrichs 1983: 99, Tsantsanoglou 1997: 103, Johnston 1999: 41n12.

[153] JJK: 70-3.

[154] Chapter One section 6 above.

Chapter Eight

A common conception of the afterlife

1: Introduction

In the preceding chapter, we looked at four sources of disparate origin. The Pythagorean Notebooks is an account of certain doctrines ascribed, whether correctly or not, to the early followers of Pythagoras. The *lex sacra* of Selinous is a set of religious regulations from Sicily. The third source is a gold leaf found in a south Italian grave giving instructions for the soul after death. Finally, we have a papyrus from Macedonia containing fragmentary details of what seems an otherwise unknown cult.

Though the first is difficult to date, the others appear to come from the mid- to late- fifth-century. There is no indication that any of them knew of the other three. There can be no question of them all representing the same cult, sharing a common and consistent doctrine. In one we have public sacrifices

regulated by the authorities, in another the rites are performed by people called magi, in a third the responsibility seems to be on each individual after their death. In one the dead are led by Hermes into the air, in another they are among the springs and cypresses of Hades, in a third they seem to be menaced by hindering daimons.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that the four do share a basic view of the afterlife and of the individual's relation to it that is unusual, at least outside the Eleusinian mysteries. Having examined the problems of each of the four sources individually, I now want to look at them together and try to bring out what these things are that they have in common. I shall be contending that they draw on a similar view of the afterlife, in which:

(i) souls survive after death,

(ii) dead souls are divided into two classes,

(iii) one class has a better fate after death,

(iv) the division is the result of initiation,

(v) the division was enforced by hostile daimons,

(vi) the hostile daimons are neutralised by the initiation,

(vii) the hostile daimons may have been souls of the dead too.

2: Souls survive after death

Any doctrine of the afterlife is naturally predicated on the assumption that something of us survives after death. This, however, was far from a universal belief in classical Greece. I have outlined the development of the ancient Greek concept of the soul above.[1] Although something of us, called the ψυχή but only partly equivalent to the later idea of soul, does survive after death in Homer, it has a shadowy existence as one of the 'strengthless heads of the dead' (νεκύων ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα, *Od.* 10.521). By the fifth century, this idea had faded, and though ψυχή was sometimes used in the context of the afterlife, it was also quite natural to speak of it as something that perished. Plato certainly regarded the immortality of the soul as a doctrine that was not generally believed and would not be readily accepted (*Phd.* 70a, *Resp.* 608d).

The Pythagorean Notebooks clearly state that the soul is immortal (ἀθάνατον τ' εἶναι αὐτήν, D.L. 8.28). When the soul is cast (ἐκριφθεῖσαν) on the earth, that is, when it dies, it wanders in the air like the body (πλάζεσθαι ἐν τῷ ἀέρι ὁμοίαν τῷ σώματι, D.L. 8.31). They add that the air is full of souls (ψυχῶν ἔμπλεον, D.L. 8.32), which are called daimons and heroes (ταύτας δαίμονάς τε καὶ ἥρωας ὀνομάζεσθαι, D.L. 8.32), and were responsible for things like dreams, divination and purifications. Heroes were illustrious dead.[2] It is not clear if this implies that all dead souls are daimons and heroes, or just a select group, or indeed whether the daimons and heroes are the same or two

[1] Chapter Two section 2.

[2] Farnell 1921, Rohde 1925: 115-55, Burkert 1985: 203-8, Whitley 1994: 220-22, Ekroth 2015.

different groups.[3] The idea that souls in general become daimons is a late development, as I demonstrated earlier,[4] but it was certainly current among the Stoics, who may have been one of the sources of the doctrines of the Notebooks.[5]

In Selinous, there is sacrifice to the Tritopatores, who as we determined in the previous chapter were ancestors, and so another form of the dead. If they were able to receive sacrifice, they must have survived in some form. The same is naturally true of the select band of heroes to whom their rites are compared (hόcπερ τοῖς hερόεcι, A10), but here there is no indication that we are not dealing with all ancestors, and therefore all the dead. As noted also in the previous chapter, there is some evidence of the cult of the Tritopatores in Attica and Kyrene, and although we have no details of what was involved there, it is natural to assume that this was a similar ancestor cult.

The gold leaves, of course, are instructions to the soul after death, and so obviously assume its survival.

The souls referred to several times in the Derveni Papyrus are certainly also the souls of the dead. This was a normal non-philosophical meaning of ψυχή.[6] Their description as countless (αἱ ψυχαὶ ἀνάριθμοί εἰσι, VI.8) is peculiarly characteristic of the dead, who are often called 'the majority', οἱ πλείους (e.g. Ar. *Eccl.* 1073),[7] are described as 'myriad tribes' (ἔθνε᾽ ... μυρία νεκρῶν, Hom.

[3] Delatte 1922: 227. Pythagoras is said elsewhere to have distinguished a hierarchy of gods, daimons, demigods or heroes and men (Iambl. *VP* 37), but this 'Pythagoras' is not necessarily closely connected with the 'Pythagoreans' of the Notebooks.

[4] Chapter Six section 3.

[5] Chapter Seven section 2.

[6] Claus 1981: 111-21, Bremmer 1983: 70-124, Henrichs 1984: 262.

[7] Rohde 1925: 570n124.

Od. 11.632) and 'swarms' (ἐσμός, Aesch. fr. 273a; σμῆνος, Soph. fr. 879),[8] and equated by some Pythagoreans with the stars of the Milky Way (κατὰ Πυθαγόραν αἱ ψυχαί, ἃς συνάγεσθαι φησὶν εἰς τὸν γαλαξίαν, Porph. *De antr. nymph.* 28).[9] Although the offerings and libations are here connected with the souls, as the cakes offered are said to be countless because the souls are countless (VI.7-8), it is not clear that the offerings are actually made to the souls, as at Selinous. I shall try to disentangle the various types of soul referred to in the papyrus in section 8 below.

Two further points are worth noting. The origin of the soul is twice referred to. In the Pythagorean Notebooks it is said to be immortal, since it is a detachment (ἀπόσπασμα, a Stoic term)[10] from the aether, and that from which it is detached is immortal (D.L. 8.28). In the Hipponion gold leaf, the soul says it is the child of earth and starry sky (Γῆς παῖς εἰμι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος), suggesting a claim to some kind of divine origin. The two claims are difficult to interpret and not altogether compatible, but they perhaps have something in common, in proposing a more than mortal origin.

There is also the apparent allusion in two of the sources to winds. The Pythagorean Notebooks say that the principles of the soul are winds, and that the soul and its principles are invisible, since the aether too is invisible (τοὺς δὲ λόγους ψυχῆς ἀνέμους εἶναι. ἀόρατόν τ᾽ εἶναι αὐτὴν καὶ τοὺς λόγους, ἐπεὶ καὶ ὁ αἰθὴρ ἀόρατος, D.L. 8.30). I hesitantly translate λόγοι as 'principles', without knowing quite what this would mean, as alternative translations such

[8] Henrichs 1984: 262n30.

[9] KPT: 170. On souls and the Milky Way in Heraclides of Pontus, see Kupreeva 2009: 108-14.

[10] Long and Sedley 1987: 2.321. As I noted above, the terminology might be due to one of the intermediate authors who transmitted the text, Alexander Polyhistor or Diogenes Laertius.

as 'reason' or 'word' would be even less intelligible. We also saw in Harpocration and other lexicons the identification of the Tritopatores with winds, or more frequently with children, masters, doorkeepers or guardians of the winds.[11]

It is not easy to see how the winds come in here, but there may be a connection with the medical theory of pneuma, a kind of vital breath throughout the body, maintained by Diocles of Carystos and later by the Stoics.[12] Also, Anaximenes says 'As our soul, being air, governs us, so too breath and air surround the whole world' (οἷον ἡ ψυχή, φησίν, ἡ ἡμετέρα ἀήρ οὖσα συγκρατεῖ ἡμᾶς, καὶ ὅλον τὸν κόσμον πνεῦμα καὶ ἀὴρ περιέχει, DK13B2). Later, Diogenes of Apollonia identified intelligence with air (καί μοι δοκεῖ τὸ τὴν νόησιν ἔχον εἶναι ὁ ἀὴρ καλούμενος ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, DK64B5).[13]

The commentator of the Derveni Papyrus identified Zeus with air (ἀὲρ δὲ Ζεύς, XXIII.3), and Betegh and Piano have both conjectured that he would have thought that souls, too, are composed of the same element.[14] It should be noted, however, that there is no direct evidence for this in what we have of the papyrus. It is an extrapolation from his identification of the divine with Zeus, or air, and seems therefore to imply that our souls too are identical with the divine Zeus, which, if it is the commentator's view, is not explicitly stated. Piano's reference to epic descriptions of the Erinyes as clothed in or walking in ἀήρ (ἠέρα ἐσσάμενοι, Hes. *Op.* 125, 255, ἠεροφοῖτις, Hom. *Il.* 9.571, 19.87) do not support her case, as being clothed in air is not the same as actually being

[11] Chapter Seven section 3 above.

[12] Festugière 1945: 52, Nutton 2004: 122, Lloyd 2007, Megino Rodríguez 2011a.

[13] For the influence of Diogenes on the Derveni commentator, see Betegh 2004: 306-21.

[14] Betegh 2004: 346, Piano 2016: 269-73.

air, and in any case ἀήρ at this early period meant 'mist'; the meaning is that they come unseen to bring retribution.

The use of the term 'winds' (ἄνεμοι) here is odd, but the Hippocratic treatise *On breaths* (Περὶ φύσων) does identify air and wind as external pneuma, breath as internal pneuma, both being necessary to life (*Flat.* 3), and the Pythagorean Notebooks (D.L. 8.28) say that the soul has been broken off from the aether, which is another kind of airy substance. Aristotle cites a so-called Orphic source (ἐν τοῖς Ὀρφικοῖς καλουμένοις) for the view that 'the soul comes in from the whole in breathing, borne by the winds' (τὴν ψυχὴν ἐκ τοῦ ὅλου εἰσιέναι ἀναπνεόντων, φερομένην ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνέμων, *De an.* 410b = *OF*421), and a quotation attributed to Orpheus by the second century AD astrologer Vettius Valens, says that the divine human soul is rooted in the aether and drawn in from the air (ψυχὴ δ' ἀνθρώποισιν ἀπ' αἰθέρος ἐρρίζωται. καὶ ἄλλως· ἀέρα δ' ἔλκοντες ψυχὴν θείαν δρεπόμεσθα, 9.1.42-4 = *OF*422, 436).[15] The semantic ranges of φῦσα, πνεῦμα, ἄνεμος, ἀήρ and αἰθήρ overlap.[16]

There is no doubt, then, that all four sources maintain the survival of the soul after death, by no means a universal belief at the time, and one which underpins everything that follows. Common allusions to an immortal or divine origin and to the soul as air, wind or pneuma are also possible.

[15] Bernabé 2011: 194-6, Bernabé 2013b: 133-4, Edmonds 2013b: 287-8.

[16] For Mesopotamian parallels see Minen 2019.

3: Dead souls are divided into two classes

In the Pythagorean Notebooks we read:

> τὸν δ᾽ Ἑρμῆν ταμίαν εἶναι τῶν ψυχῶν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πομπαῖον λέγεσθαι καὶ πυλαῖον καὶ χθόνιον, ἐπειδήπερ οὗτος εἰσπέμπει ἀπὸ τῶν σωμάτων τὰς ψυχὰς ἀπό τε γῆς καὶ ἐκ θαλάττης: καὶ ἄγεσθαι τὰς μὲν καθαρὰς ἐπὶ τὸν ὕψιστον, τὰς δ᾽ ἀκαθάρτους μήτ᾽ ἐκείναις πελάζειν μήτ᾽ ἀλλήλαις, δεῖσθαι δ᾽ ἐν ἀρρήκτοις δεσμοῖς ὑπ᾽ Ἐρινύων.
>
> (D.L. 8.31)

> Hermes is the steward of souls, and for that reason is called Escort and Gatekeeper and of the Underworld, since it is he who brings in the souls from their bodies from land and sea. The pure are led into the uppermost region, but the impure cannot approach them or each other, but are bound in unbreakable bonds by the Erinyes.

All souls after death are therefore divided into two classes, pure (καθαραί) and impure (ἀκάθαρτοι). It seems clear from the way this is expressed that there are not any unassigned souls, any intermediate class, or any different degrees of impurity. Similarly, at Selinous the sacrifices are to two kinds of Tritopatores, to the polluted (τοῖς μιαροῖς) and to the pure (τοῖς καθαροῖς).

In the other two sources, the two groups are not distinguished by such identifying terms. It is easy to see, however, that two groups are implied in each case. In the gold leaves the other souls of the dead are described as drinking from the first spring, probably that of Lethe, or Forgetfulness; those following the instructions on the gold leaf, however, are to avoid this and go to the spring of Memory. Again, then, we have two mutually exclusive groups. Although the Derveni Papyrus is less explicit, we can deduce from the presence of initiates (μύσται, VI.8) the existence of a corresponding group of non-initiates, which it is reasonable to suppose formed a significant distinction in the afterlife.

This raises two obvious questions. What do pure and impure mean here? And is this distinction really of the same kind as that in the two last sources, those initiated or possessing the gold leaf and the others?

The debate on the meaning of pure and impure has largely centred on the Tritopatores of Selinous. Opinion has divided on whether they are different groups, or the same group before and after purification. The first editors think them the same, and that the pollution was probably caused by homicide within the kin group transferred from the killers to their ancestors.[17] Johnston, agreeing that they are the same, is sceptical of divinities being polluted by humans, and thinks the pollution caused by the ancestors' own transgressions; she refers to the itinerant priests of Plato who offer purifications from evil-doing (καθαρμοὶ ἀδικημάτων) for both the living and the dead (ἔτι ζῶσιν ... καὶ τελευτήσασιν, *Resp.* 364e-365a = *OF*573).[18] Clinton, however, believes them two distinct groups, like the black and white goddesses of Megalopolis (Paus. 8.34.1-3); if they had been the same, he argues, they would have been referred to as 'as pure' (*h*ος καθαροῖς) not 'the pure' (τοῖς καθαροῖς), placing perhaps excessive emphasis on the choice of a single word.[19] Robertson agrees that there are two groups, connecting the difference with the improvement in the weather during the summer months, an argument I am unable to follow.[20]

As perhaps will be apparent from the variety of these theories, none of them have any very conclusive support, though Johnston makes an important connection to the private practitioners. In putting forward an explanation, I

[17] JJK: 29-30.

[18] Johnston 1999: 52-4.

[19] Clinton 1996: 172.

[20] Robertson 2010: 156-7.

should like to focus on the meaning of the term καθαρός. Like many such words, its import could be quite varied, including such meanings as 'unmixed', 'genuine', or 'free from debt' (*LSJ s.v.* καθαρός). In a religious sense it is often translated as 'pure'. As Zuntz observed, however, it has a different semantic range from words like ὅσιος or ἁγνός, and often carries the implication of 'purified' or 'cleansed from pollution'.[21]

So Orestes, after his ritual purification for the murder of Clytemnestra, is described as a ἱκέτης ... καθαρὸς ἀβλαβής, 'a purified and harmless suppliant' (Aesch. *Eum.* 474). Iphigenia performs ritual purification of the temple of Artemis, so that καθαρὸν οἰκήσεις δόμον, the goddess 'shall inhabit a purified dwelling' (Eur. *IT* 1231). There is therefore an implication that the καθαροί have not just maintained a pure state, for example because of a certain mode of life, but have gone through a process designed to make them pure.

As to what this process might be, there is a significant link in Plato:

> καὶ κινδυνεύουσι καὶ οἱ τὰς τελετὰς ἡμῖν οὗτοι καταστήσαντες οὐ φαῦλοί τινες εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τῷ ὄντι πάλαι αἰνίττεσθαι ὅτι ὃς ἂν ἀμύητος καὶ ἀτέλεστος εἰς Ἅιδου ἀφίκηται ἐν βορβόρῳ κείσεται, ὁ δὲ κεκαθαρμένος τε καὶ τετελεσμένος ἐκεῖσε ἀφικόμενος μετὰ θεῶν οἰκήσει.
>
> (*Phd*. 69c = *OF*434)

> And very likely too those who established our mysteries were not ignorant, but in fact long ago hinted that he who comes to Hades uninitiated will lie in filth, but he who comes there purified and initiated will dwell with the gods.

[21] Zuntz 1971: 307. For a theory of how this meaning might have evolved, see De Bock Cano 1982: 122-6.

Here, having been purified (κεκαθαρμένος) is equated with having been initiated (τετελεσμένος) in the mysteries.[22] Similarly, in the *Phaedrus*, the initiates (μυούμενοι) are identified with the pure (καθαροί):

> ὁλόκληρα δὲ καὶ ἁπλᾶ καὶ ἀτρεμῆ καὶ εὐδαίμονα φάσματα μυούμενοί τε καὶ ἐποπτεύοντες ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρᾷ, καθαροὶ ὄντες
>
> (*Phdr.* 250c)
>
> Initiated and seeing as an initiate perfect and simple and calm and happy apparitions in a pure light, being ourselves pure

We can also add the evidence of a different type of gold leaf, those of the A series, in which the soul begins by stating Ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρῶν καθαρά, 'I come purified from the purified'.[23] This kind of polyptoton is a common Greek idiom, though more usually expressing parentage, as ἀγαθοὶ ἐξ ἀγαθῶν, 'fine sons of fine fathers' (Andoc. *De myst.* 109).[24] Here it does not seem likely that the soul would be claiming that its parents had also undergone purification, and so it might reasonably be interpreted as referring to the initiates in which the dead person was also included.[25]

There is evidence, then, that καθαρός could mean 'initiated' in certain contexts. If so, there is no problem about the use of ἀκάθαρτος, its negative, for 'uninitiated' in the Pythagorean Notebooks. μιαρός at Selinous is more difficult. Although it also can be seen as a negative of καθαρός, it does carry a

[22] Clinton 2003: 53, however, believes that they are not synonyms, but are being distinguished as two separate processes. Purification was a preliminary to initiation at Eleusis, but it is difficult to see why Plato would single it out for special mention. *Leg.* 815c, which Clinton also cites, clearly refers to Bacchic dancing rather than initiation into the mysteries.

[23] A1-3; A5 is similar.

[24] Translation of MacDowell 1962. For other examples, see Zuntz 1971: 307, Liapis 2012: 115.

[25] As by Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 100-2, who also suggest vegetarianism and other observances, and Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 121-2.

strong sense of 'defiled, disgusting, shameless',[26] which might seem inappropriate when applied to the merely uninitiated. I shall return to the likelihood of an initiation cult at Selinous below.[27]

It is clear, therefore, that in all four sources the dead souls are divided into two classes, and there is some indication that despite the different vocabulary of purity and initiation the criteria for this division might possibly be the same.

[26] Parker 1983: 3-5.

[27] Section 5.

4: One class has a better fate after death

The idea of being able to achieve a better fate in the next world, one available not only to illustrious heroes, but also to ordinary people, is particularly associated with the Eleusinian mysteries.[28] 'He who goes under earth having seen this is blest', says Pindar (ὄλβιος ὅστις ἰδὼν κεῖν' εἶς' ὑπὸ χθόν', fr. 137a = *OF*444). Sophocles, too, says that 'those mortals who have seen these rites and go to Hades are thrice blessed, for they alone have life there, the others have all evils' (ὡς τρισόλβιοι κεῖνοι βροτῶν οἳ ταῦτα δερχθέντες τέλη μόλως' ἐς Ἅιδου· τοῖσδε γὰρ μόνοις ἐκεῖ ζῆν ἔστι, τοῖς δ' ἄλλοισι πάντ' ἔχει κακά, fr. 837 Radt). Isocrates speaks of 'the rite of which those participating have pleasanter hopes for the end of life and all eternity' (τὴν τελετήν, ἧς οἱ μετασχόντες περί τε τῆς τοῦ βίου τελευτῆς καὶ τοῦ σύμπαντος αἰῶνος ἡδίους τὰς ἐλπίδας ἔχουσιν, *Paneg*. 28).

As we have seen in an earlier chapter,[29] there had also come into being the practice of Dionysiac initiation concerned with the afterlife. As far as the evidence there examined goes, this seems to have been in existence by the beginning of the fourth century, slightly later than the sources we are looking at here, as far as they can be dated. I demonstrated there, however, that there is clear evidence that it too promised a better fate after death.

There is no support for this from Selinous, but in the Pythagorean Notebooks, after Hermes has led in the souls, the pure are taken into the uppermost region (τὸν ὕψιστον, D.L. 8.31), while the impure are bound by the Erinyes. Clearly,

[28] Chapter Two section 5 above.

[29] Chapter Three.

the pure have a better fate than the impure, and it is reasonable to suppose that the highest region is also the best.

In the gold leaf, the soul who has successfully answered the guards and drunk from the waters of Memory proceeds along the sacred road (ὁδὸν ... ἱερὰν) that the other initiates and bacchics travel. We are not told where the sacred road leads to,[30] but as it is sacred, those who travel it are glorious (κλεινοί), and it can only be reached by passing a test not even attempted by common souls, it must surely lead to some kind of abode of the blessed.

There is no explicit mention of a better fate in the Derveni Papyrus, but I think it can be assumed from the presence of initiates and the requirement for the magi to neutralise the hindering daimons. Non-initiates that cannot command the services of the magi are presumably abandoned to the daimons. There is also an earlier reference to the terrors of Hades (Ἄιδου δεινά, V.6), which it seems that the readers of the papyrus were required to believe in, doubtless indicating the fate of those not in the privileged class.

The precise location of all this is difficult to specify. The action of the gold leaf takes place in the well-built halls of Hades (Ἀίδαο δόμους εὐηρέας), though we hear of no actual buildings, but only a pleasant parkland of springs and trees. Presumably this is in the traditional location of Hades, underground.[31] We do not know if the sacred road leads to another part of Hades, or out of it altogether. The Tritopatores at Selinous, both pure and impure, must be underground, as libations to them are poured down. The mention in the

[30] But compare Pindar (*Ol.* 2.70 = *OF*445) where the road of Zeus (Διὸς ὁδὸν) leads to the Isles of the Blessed.

[31] On the geography of the underworld, see Chapter Two section 3 above.

Derveni Papyrus of daimons under the earth (δαίμονες οἱ κατὰ γῆς, III.6 Ferrari)[32] seems to identify the scene as subterranean also.

The exception is the Pythagorean Notebooks, where the souls, daimons and heroes, inhabit the air, and the pure are led into the uppermost region. Delatte suggests that this is the highest celestial sphere, that of the fixed stars,[33] but it is not precisely identified here. Confusingly, Hermes, the psychopomp who leads them there, is called χθόνιον, 'of the underworld' (8.31); either the geography is more complex than it seems at first sight, or this is a purely conventional epithet.

It seems in general, then, that the purpose of the division of the dead souls into two classes was to assign one class a better fate after death.

[32] γῆς is a supplement, but they are definitely under something, and it is difficult to see what else it might be but earth.

[33] Delatte 1922: 226-7. He rightly rejects an influence from Jewish sources.

5: The division is the result of initiation

Both the Derveni Papyrus and the gold leaf clearly refer to initiation, as is proved by the appearance of initiates (μύσται) in a significant role in both, making offerings in the papyrus and travelling along the sacred road in the gold leaf.[34]

Henrichs has put forward the suggestion that the initiates in the Derveni Papyrus might be Eleusinian, relying in part on Graf's observation that μύσται always referred to Eleusis in fifth-century Athens.[35] This ignores the possibility that we might have something new here.[36] The activities described bear no relation to the Eleusinian ritual,[37] and the magi cannot by any stretch of the imagination represent the Eleusinian hierophant,[38] so this suggestion must be rejected. Johnston makes a similar suggestion for the gold leaf,[39] but again there is nothing in the text that is in any way characteristic of Eleusis, and it seems unlikely either that the scene of springs and guards was a previously unsuspected component of those mysteries, or that it would be accepted as an addition to the long-established rites.

[34] On initiation as the ritual context in the gold leaves, see Torjussen 2010: 131-67.

[35] Henrichs 1984: 266-8; Graf 1974: 29-30. With different views: Obbink 1997: 51 (Eleusinian or Dionysiac), Tsantsanoglou 1997: 115-17 (possibly Eleusinian or Baccchic, but probably neither), Bernabé 2014: 35 (Orphic-Bacchic).

[36] See Chapter Three above for the evidence for the introduction of Dionysiac mysteries at about this time.

[37] Wineless libations may have been involved at Eleusis, as Henrichs suggests (Henrichs 1984: 266-7), but there is nothing else in the rites described to suggest Eleusis.

[38] Bernabé 2014: 35.

[39] Graf and Johnston 2013: 120-1.

The soul in the gold leaf that has successfully passed the guard proceeds along the sacred road travelled by the other glorious initiates and bacchics (ἄλλοι μύσται καὶ βάκχοι).[40] The reference to other (ἄλλοι) clearly implies that the soul addressed here is one of them. The road is sacred, and reserved to privileged groups, and to those, presumably in fact the same, who have correctly followed these instructions. What then is the relationship of the bacchics to the initiates? They could be identical, or a sub-group of the initiates, or a separate group.[41] Bacchics are normally associated with Dionysus, but Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal propose that these are not traditional Dionysiac bacchics, but are a sub-group of what they believe are Orphic initiates, comprising those of the initiates who also follow the ascetic and ritual prescriptions of the Orphic life.[42] They provide no evidence for or parallels to this interpretation, which seems invented to reconcile the text with their preconception that the gold leaves were produced by an Orphic sect. Their bacchics in this theory do not seem to gain by their piety, as their fate is the same as the ordinary initiates.

The obvious solution is that this is a hendiadys, and the two terms are synonymous. The gold leaf is therefore connected with a Dionysiac initiation, and in fact forms probably the earliest evidence for such initiation, as I observed above.[43] We have therefore evidence that in one case at least this initiation was Dionysiac.

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[40] Compare D3, ἄποινος γὰρ ὁ μύστης, considered in Chapter Five section 7 (iv) above,

[41] See Chapter Three section 6 above for discussion of the bacchics in the gold leaves in the context of Dionysiac initiation.

[42] Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 52-3. See also Jiménez San Cristóbal 2009.

[43] Chapter Three section 6.

We have no direct evidence of initiation at Selinous or in the Pythagorean Notebooks. We have therefore to rely on analogy with the other two, and on the possibility, examined above[44] that the term καθαρός used in both is here synonymous with initiate. The case of Selinous is the more difficult. I have already drawn attention to the apparent unsuitability of μιαρός, used there as the opposite of καθαρός, to mean 'non-initiate'. There is the further problem that the evidence from Selinous comes from what are probably public regulations, whereas the initiation that we have been discussing was normally private.

However, we do not know the precise context of the Selinous tablet;[45] it certainly included rites to take place at home (οἴϙοι, A21). Moreover, the mysteries at Eleusis were of course a civic institution, the Derveni Papyrus refers to those celebrating rites in the cities (ἀνθρώπων ἐν πόλεσιν ἐπιτελέσαντες, XX.1), contrasted with private practitioners who would have the chance to explain what they were doing, and Plato speaks of practitioners who persuade not only individuals but even cities (πείθοντες οὐ μόνον ἰδιώτας ἀλλὰ καὶ πόλεις, *Resp.* 364e = *OF*573). We cannot therefore exclude the possibility that this was a public initiation cult.

There is certainly clear evidence, then, of initiation in two of the four sources, and there are grounds for believing that that may have been the case in the other two as well.

[44] Section 3.

[45] Carbon 2015: 166-73 discusses the question.

6: The division was enforced by hostile daimons

The Pythagorean Notebooks state that the Erinyes bind the impure souls: 'the impure cannot approach [the pure souls] or each other, but are bound in unbreakable bonds by the Erinyes'.[46] As we saw in an earlier chapter,[47] the Erinyes are primarily instruments of vengeance and punishment in general in classical Greece, their usual association among modern scholars with blood kin murder being largely a creation of the tragic poets. Heraclitus, quoted in the Derveni Papyrus, calls them assistants of justice (Δίκης ἐπίκουροι, IV.9 = DK22B94). There is therefore nothing surprising in finding them in this role here.[48]

The evidence for Selinous is much weaker. We did indeed see there avenging daimons called *elasteroi*, which seemed to be similar to or identical with the Erinyes. In what is preserved in the *lex sacra* (column B), however, the *elasteros* afflicts a living man who himself has to take action, by sacrifice and theoxenia, to purify himself (καθαίρεσθαι). The *elasteros* could also attach itself to a homicide, if that is what αὐτορέκτας means. There is, however, no suggestion in what we have that it could affect the dead. Certain *elasteroi* are described as being ξενικόν or πατρῶιον (B7),[49] and one might take πατρῶιον to

[46] τὰς δ᾽ ἀκαθάρτους μήτ᾽ ἐκείναις πελάζειν μήτ᾽ ἀλλήλαις, δεῖσθαι δ᾽ ἐν ἀρρήκτοις δεσμοῖς ὑπ᾽ Ἐρινύων, D.L. 8.31.

[47] Chapter Six section 6.

[48] We may also compare the flagellating figure in the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii (*Fig. 8*), often connected with Dionysiac initiation, with depictions of the Erinyes such as the 4th century BC Apulian krater illustrated above (*Fig. 11*). The wings, short tunic and boots are common to both, which suggests that we may have here a portrayal of a hostile daimon in action. (I owe the suggestion of a link to Richard Janko, paper at the FIEC/CA conference, London, July 2019.)

[49] See Chapter Seven section 3 for suggested explanations of these terms.

mean 'ancestral' and therefore relating to the dead, but it would be hard to account for ξενικόν in this context, and these *elasteroi* are still ones that are afflicting the living.

In the Derveni Papyrus we have the presence of hindering daimons:

> ἐπ̣[ωιδὴ δ]ὲ̣ μάγων δύν[α]ται δ̣αίμονας ἐμ[ποδών]
> γι̣[νομένο]υ̣ς μεθιστάν̣αι· δαίμο̣νες ἐμπο[δών δ' εἰσὶ][50]
> ψ[υχαῖς ἐχθ]ρ̣οί[51].
>
> (VI.2-4)

> the incantation of the magi is able to remove/change the hindering daimons; hindering daimons [hostile to? vengeful against? guarding? good at (hindering)? hinder like?] souls

Various suggestions have been put forward as to the identity of these hindering daimons.[52] They include the unjust men (ἄδικοι) apparently referred to in an earlier column (III.8),[53] vengeful souls of the dead in the service of Justice,[54] souls who interfere with the rites of sacrifice,[55] or beings who demand a penalty for the guilt of each soul before allowing it to pass to the afterlife.[56] Parallels have been drawn with the souls who bar the way to the soul of the unburied Patroclus (τῆλέ με εἴργουσι ψυχαί, εἴδωλα καμόντων, *Il.* 23.72),[57] or with the Empousa ('hinderer') of Aristophanes' *Frogs* (292-

[50] δαίμο̣νες ἐμπο[δίζουσι ὡς ('sono d'ostaculo como') Piano.

[51] 'hostile'; τιμω]ροῖ ('vengeful') Tsantsanoglou 1997: 113 *conj.*; φρου]ροί ('guarding') Tsantsanoglou 1997: 113 *conj.*; δει]νοί ('good at') Ferrari.

[52] ἐμποδών is an adverb, 'in the way', but most naturally rendered by an adjective in English.

[53] KPT: 168.

[54] Jourdan 2003: 6.

[55] Henrichs 1984: 257.

[56] Bernabé 2014: 34.

[57] Tsantsanoglou 1997: 112.

305).[58] Tsantsanoglou, in accordance with his view of the magi as Persians, looks to Persian sources: he considers and rejects the *daêvas*, or evil spirits, in favour of the *Fravashis*, or guardian spirits, though the resemblance does not seem close.[59] Ferrari notes the differences between Iranian cult and Derveni, and suggests they are due to some kind of cross-cultural adaptation.[60]

Tsantsanoglou[61] has also suggested a parallel between the hindering daimons and the daimons of Empedocles (DK31B115 = *OF*449), but I think he misinterprets Empedocles' text. The passage describes the punishment by exile of beings who have committed a fault (what exactly is disputed). Tsantsanoglou says that the μακραίονες δαίμονες ('long-lived daimons')[62] keep the guilty away from the blessed ones, but in fact δαίμονες is in apposition to the previous part of the sentence, and is Empedocles' term for the guilty ones themselves: 'whoever having erred swears a false oath – one of the spirits who have been allotted long-lasting life – he shall wander thrice ten thousand seasons away from the blessed ones'.[63] There is therefore no parallel.

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[58] Bernabé 2014: 34; Brown 1991 links this with the Eleusinian mysteries. See also Piano 2016: 234-7.

[59] Tsantsanoglou 1997: 112-13. Ahmadi 2014 tries to make a case for the *daēvas*, who seek a role as the gatekeepers of Mazda (Ahmadi 2014: 499). There may, of course, be multiple sources for some of these concepts.

[60] Ferrari 2011b: 80-82.

[61] Tsantsanloglou 1997: 112.

[62] He prefers the version of Plutarch, μακραίονες agreeing with δαίμονες, to the normally accepted text of Hippolytus, μακραίονος agreeing with βίοιο, 'long life' (as in e.g. Soph. *OT* 518); Wright 1995 *ad loc*. This is, however, not necessary for his interpretation.

[63] ὅς καὶ ἐπίορκον ἁμαρτήσας ἐπομώσει, δαίμονες οἵτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο, τρὶς μὲν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι. Translation of Barnes 1987: 194. My interpretation is that of Hippolytus (*Haer.* 7.29.14), followed by Wright 1995 *ad loc* and every translation I have been able to consult. I do not understand what the syntax would be in Tsantsanoglou's version.

Martín Hernández and Bernabé have drawn attention to passages in the *De defectu oraculorum* of Plutarch.[64] They are, however, incorrect in actually ascribing these to his account of the mysteries; concerning those, he says, his lips are sealed (εὔστομά μοι κείσθω, 417c), but he adds that there were also other festivals and sacrifices (ἑορτὰς δὲ καὶ θυσίας) involving eating raw flesh and a great deal of noise, which he believed were to avert evil daimons (δαιμόνων δὲ φαύλων ἀποτροπῆς ἕνεκα). A little later, he refers to 'people making libations and performing actions to purify and soothe the anger of daimons whom they call blood avengers, as if they proceeded against the memories of some unforgettable ancient pollution'.[65] The evidence is late, and does not correspond very closely to the specifics of our text.

I have already mentioned[66] other occurrences of cognates of ἐμποδών: the shape-changing Empousa (Ἔμπουσα) of the *Frogs*, described in late sources as a kind of daimon (δαιμονιῶδες, Hesych. *s.v. Empousa*, schol. Ar. *Ran.* 293), and the wicked daimons of Iamblichus, potentially hindering (ἐμπόδιον, *Myst.* 3.31) those performing sacred rites. It is not clear, however, how far the use of the term is coincidental, and how far there is a real parallel.

As may emerge from the range of the conjectures above, there is no clear indication in the papyrus of the identity and function of the hindering daimons. It is, however, reasonable to conclude that it is the souls that they are hindering. The text (VI.3-4)[67] makes some kind of statement about their relationship to souls, and there seems no plausible alternative. They are

[64] Martín Hernández 2006: 493, Bernabé 2014: 42-3.

[65] χοάς τινας χεῖσθαι καὶ δρᾶν ἃ δρῶσιν ἄνθρωποι μηνίματα δαιμόνων ἀφοσιούμενοι καὶ πραΰνοντες, οὓς ἀλάστορας καὶ παλαμναίους ὀνομάζουσιν, ὡς ἀλήστων τινῶν καὶ παλαιῶν μιασμάτων μνήμαις ἐπεξιόντας, 418b-c.

[66] Chapter Six section 5.

[67] See text above for alternative versions.

therefore acting in a similar way to the Erinyes in the Pythagorean Notebooks. I shall discuss the relationship of the Erinyes and the hindering daimons below.[68]

The hostile daimons in the gold leaf are of rather different appearance. They are represented by the guards at the spring of Memory who bar the way of the soul unless it correctly answers their questions.

It has sometimes been claimed that the guards or guardians mentioned here appear elsewhere in similar contexts.[69] On examination, however, the cases cited are rather different. The same word, φύλακες, does indeed appear in Hesiod ('guardians of mortal men', φύλακες θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων, *Op*. 123, 253), Heraclitus ('become vigilant guardians of the living and the dead', φύλακας γίνεσθαι ἐγερτὶ ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν, DK22B63 = *OF*456) and Plato ('sent as the guardian of his life', φύλακα συμπέμπειν τοῦ βίου, *Resp.* 620d-e).[70] The function of these guardians, however, is quite distinct: they are guardians of humanity, not of the underworld. They watch protectively over mortals in life, as well as in death, not try to bar their way as in the gold leaves.

Nor are the shrewdly questioning guards of the spring of Memory much like an inarticulate monster of the underworld such as the multi-headed Cerberus of Hesiod (*Th.* 311-12).[71] In fact, although the role of Cerberus was later

[68] Section 8.

[69] 'recurrent in Antiquity' (Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 35-6); 'encountered frequently in ancient Mediterranean eschatological texts and in related documents' (Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 112).

[70] Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 35-6.

[71] Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 112; *contra* Edmonds 2004: 63.

expanded in connection with the myth of Heracles, his primary function was to keep the dead in, not keep them out:

> ἐς μὲν ἰόντας
> σαίνει ὀμῶς οὐρῇ τε καὶ οὔασιν ἀμφοτέροισιν,
> ἐξελθεῖν δ' οὐκ αὖτις ἐᾷ πάλιν, ἀλλὰ δοκεύων
> ἐσθίει, ὅν κε λάβῃσι πυλέων ἔκτοσθεν ἰόντα.
>
> (*Th.* 770-3)
>
> He fawns on those going in with his tail and both ears together, but he will not let them go out again, but watches and eats those he might capture going out through the gates.

Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal also suggest that an oriental archer depicted on a lost fourth or third century amphora from Vulci is a visual representation of the guards,[72] but we have insufficient details to be able to say.

Parallels from other cultures are more promising. We can perhaps dismiss the late and eclectic Mithras liturgy,[73] with its proliferation of bull- and snake-headed gods each requiring their own password, as this dates from many centuries after the gold leaves and doubtless drew on many different sources. More striking is the Egyptian *Book of the dead*.[74] This has both the thirst of the dead with refreshment from a spring, and the guards that the soul has to pass. However, as Zuntz observed, the two are here separate, with the drink being freely given and the guards appearing later, at the gates; also, the guards are to be intimidated into letting the soul pass, rather than requiring a password

[72] Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 36.

[73] *PGM* 4.625-710; Johnston in Graf and Johnston 2013: 234n24.

[74] Zuntz 1971: 37-6, Lucarelli 2010, Dousa 2011; cf. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1932: 200, Edmonds 2004: 48n56.

or claim of lineage.[75] The soul in the *Book of the dead* may also be threatened by gangs of malevolent demons.[76] If this is a source, the elements have been recombined into something significantly different. The same could be said of the Mesopotamian gatekeeper of the seven gates of the netherworld.[77]

The guards at the spring, then, represent something uncommon in the classical Greek picture of the afterlife, and although their form may be very different from the Erinyes of the Pythagorean Notebooks, they function as daimons hostile to the lower class of souls in a similar way. Although the daimons are in each case hostile to the souls, they are essentially instruments of justice, and should therefore be distinguished from daimons that are bad, evil-working, perverse or villainous (φαῦλος, κακοεργός, δυστράπελος, μοχθηρός); as we saw above,[78] these are not clearly attested until much later than the classical period.

There is therefore evidence in at least three of the four sources of hostile daimons of different kinds enforcing the division of souls.

[75] Dousa also notes that the chronology does not fit well; Dousa 2011: 139-40.

[76] Lucarelli 2011: 115-16.

[77] Cooper 1992: 24-5, Scurlock 1995: 1886.

[78] Chapter Six section 5.

7: The hostile daimons are neutralised by the initiation

There is no evidence for this in the Pythagorean Notebooks. In the gold leaf, the neutralisation is effected by the soul's knowledge of the correct response to the guards' questions, due to its possession of the instructions on the gold leaf. This must have been supplied by some religious practitioner, whether as the culmination of some initiation ceremony or merely as a cash transaction we do not know.

The offerings in the Derveni Papyrus are having some kind of propitiatory effect: θυσίαι μειλίσσουσι ... (VI.1). Unfortunately there is then a lacuna, so that we have to guess whom or what they are propitiating, but this is immediately followed by a statement about the magi, who are presumably the ones making the offerings, and the hindering daimons, who are clearly hostile beings, and therefore likely to need propitiating. It seems likely, then, that is the daimons who are being propitiated.

The incantations of the magi are able to μεθιστάναι the hindering daimons (VI.2-3). μεθίστημι can mean 'change', 'set free', 'kill' or 'remove' (*LSJ s.v.*). Proposals for its meaning here include put out of the way, transform,[79] modify their intentions,[80] and maintain at a distance.[81] It is clear that the effect must be to stop them hindering, whether by removing them physically, or by changing their nature. I shall pursue the implications of this second possibility further in the next section.

[79] Both Tsantsanoglou 1997: 111-12.

[80] Jourdan 2003: 6.

[81] Bernabé 2014: 39.

The inscription at Selinous begins: 'To Zeus Eumenes [and] the Eumenides sacrifice a full-grown (sheep), and to Zeus Meilichios in the (plot) of Myskos a full-grown (sheep)' (τõι Εὐμενεῖ θύ[ε]ν̣ [καὶ] / ταῖc Εὐμενίδεcι : τέλεον, καὶ τõι Διὶ : τôι Μιλιχίοι τõι : ἐν Μύcϙο : τέλεον :, A8-9). Meilichios ('gentle', 'mild', and so 'appeasing', 'propitiatory') is a widespread epiclesis of Zeus, and received cult at Selinous.[82] The associated verb, μειλίσσω, can be used of propitiating the dead (*Il.* 7.410), and we saw above that the same word, μειλίσσουσι, is used for the propitiation in the Derveni Papyrus.

Zeus Eumenes is not otherwise known.[83] He is here associated with the Eumenides, who, as we saw above,[84] may be identical with the Erinyes, who are sometimes said to have, in another word from the same root, 'implacable hearts' (ἀμείλιχον ἦτορ, *Il.* 9.454). These sacrifices are presented together, and so appear, from the conventions of the inscription, to be related rites.[85] It is possible, then, that Zeus Eumenes is another aspect of Zeus Meilichios, and propitiates the Erinyes to convert them into Eumenides.[86]

There is therefore evidence in three out of the four sources of some kind of propitiatory or neutralising activity directed against those we have identified as hostile daimons.

[82] JJK: 81-103, 132-6, Robu 2015: 87-9.

[83] Except in Eumenid Pergamon, where the meaning is different; JJK: 77.

[84] Chapter Six section 7.

[85] Initial asyndeton for each set of prescriptions; JJK: 21, Clinton 1996: 165-6.

[86] JJK: 79-80.

8: The hostile daimons may have been souls of the dead too

We have so far established across our four sources that they share a common view of the afterlife. Souls survive after death, and the dead souls are divided into two classes. One class has a better fate after death, and the division is the result of initiation. It was enforced by hostile daimons, which, however, were neutralised for the initiates.

The final proposition that I am going to put forward depends entirely on the evidence of the Derveni Papyrus. It is therefore an open question whether it is a peculiar belief of those who produced that document, or whether it is in fact one also shared by the other sources, though not reflected in the fragmentary evidence that has survived. It concerns the origin of the hostile daimons who enforce their fate on the souls of the dead. There is a strong case that they may have been souls of the dead also.

The Derveni Papyrus has a confusing range of beings whose relation to each other is not at first at all clear. There are:

(i) souls (ψυχαί, VI.4, VI.8, VI.10);

(ii) beings appeased by offerings (VI.1), for which the editors suggest 'souls' (ψυχάς) and Ferrari a word of Persian origin meaning roughly 'heroes' (ἀρτάδας);

(iii) daimons under the earth, servants of the gods (δαίμονες οἱ κατὰ γῆς ... θεῶν ὑπερέται, III.6-7);

(iv) the hindering daimons (δαίμονες ἐμποδών, VI.2-3);

(v) the Erinyes (I.6, II.3, III.5, IV.9), assistants of justice (Δίκης ἐπίκουροι, IV.9);

(vi) the Eumenides (VI.9).

Before putting forward my own explanation, it will be useful to review the way in which the problem has previously been approached by scholars.[87]

Tsantsanoglou was the first to be able to consider the first six columns, in his own reading, in the form of a commentary on them.[88] The souls, he says, are the dead, which include the Erinyes and Eumenides, who seem to be the same. The Erinyes are the souls of the righteous, as are the daimons; presumably he means the daimons are another name for the Erinyes. The righteous are here identified with the initiates, by an extension from the evidence of distinguished persons like Alcestis becoming daimons after death.[89] Honours are paid to the Erinyes/Eumenides in the form of libations, bird sacrifice and hymns. The hindering daimons are like the Iranian Fravashis and hinder sinful souls. Justice punishes the unrighteous in some way. From his supplement of ἑκάστωι in III.4, everyone is said to have a personal daimon.[90]

I think this account is on the right lines, but it has a number of inadequacies. From what do the hindering daimons hinder the sinful souls? If daimons are the souls of initiates, and everyone has a personal daimon, how do the two sets of daimons relate to each other? Can not being initiated be equated to a sin punishable by Justice? If the Erinyes are the souls of the righteous, who are equivalent to the initiates, and the Erinyes receive libations and sacrifices,

[87] Bernabé 2014: 41-4 helpfully reviews what he describes as a 'complex demonological theory', without, however, coming to very definite conclusions.

[88] Tsantsanoglou 1997: 96-113.

[89] Chapter Six section 4.

[90] See Chapter Six section 4 and Chapter Seven section 5 for my criticism of this.

then it seems to follow that the initiates themselves will receive cult after death. He does not draw this conclusion explicitly or consider its implications.

Johnston considers the question in her study of the relations between the dead and the living in ancient Greece.[91] The souls are again the dead, who might easily have been referred to as daimons, and the Eumenides are specifically identified as souls. The Erinyes, however, are different, the traditional avenging spirits, either functioning like the hindering daimons or punishing the unjust. They are therefore not the same as the Eumenides. The hindering daimons are transformed (μεθιστάναι, VI.3) into Eumenides. It is peculiar, she admits, for dead souls to become deities, so she suggests that this must be some idiosyncratic idea of the Derveni author.

The most awkward part of this theory is the assumption that there are two different sets of hostile spirits, the Erinyes and the hindering daimons. It is difficult to differentiate their functions. The ones changed into the Eumenides are not the Erinyes, as one might expect from the traditional identification, but the hindering daimons. This would also leave the Erinyes presumably untransformed and active, so one would have perhaps to assume that they attacked only the bad souls, while the hindering daimons attacked the good, or both kinds, which is getting some way beyond what we have warrant for in the text.

Betegh produced the first full-length monograph on the papyrus. His conclusions on the first columns are, however, very tentative.[92] The souls, daimons, Erinyes and Eumenides, he believes, are all groups of the dead. It appears that the daimons are a sub-group of the dead, though I am not clear

[91] Johnston 1999: 276-9.

[92] Betegh 2004: 85-9.

how or why this sub-group is supposed to be constituted. Cautiously following Tsantsanoglou, he thinks that the Erinyes are the souls of the righteous, or initiates, referring to their association with maenads in tragedy. They are probably the same as the Eumenides and are a functional sub-group of the daimons, presumably the same as the hindering daimons, and play a not clearly specified part in funerary or initiatory ritual. The daimons may also be allotted to each individual, and may also receive the souls into the netherworld; again, he does not say how this might relate to their other functions. I do not think that this has been worked out in sufficient detail.

Janko takes a radically different view, based in part on his own readings of the papyrus.[93] That the daimons are servants of the gods or of Justice is, he believes, just the opinion of the magi, Persian or Greek, whom the author is attacking (κατὰ τοὺς μάγους, III.5 Janko). The libations people make to the Erinyes, as vengeful agents of the dead, are mistaken, as they do not exist; instead, they are placating the angry dead[94] directly. The daimons, Erinyes and Eumenides are all the same, but on the Derveni author's rationalist view, Janko maintains, none of them exist.

I do not think that Janko's view of the author as a rationalist sceptic can be sustained. It is true that in column XX he attacks performers of sacred rites (τοῦ τέχνην ποιουμένου τὰ ἱερά, XX.3-4), but this seems to be because they do not explain what they are doing, not because their rites are ineffective. There is no sign of scepticism in column VI. Janko's interpretation does depend heavily on his own readings of the text. It might also be observed that there are limits to the Derveni author's rationalism in Janko's version, if he cannot

[93] Janko 2008: 45-6.

[94] ἐξώλεας, III.4 Janko *ap.* Kotwick 2017, more usually translated as 'pernicious (men)'.

believe in the Erinyes but can believe in angry souls of the dead bent on vengeance.

Piano takes the daimons, Erinyes and Eumenides all to be souls, or more precisely particular categories of soul.[95] They are intermediate between the human and divine, as explained by Plato's Diotima (*Symp.* 202e-203a), and can be regarded as a pathway for humans to attain divinity.[96] This seems to underplay their hindering function. She also places strong emphasis on their punishment of the unjust, the ἐξώλεις of column III,[97] and does not explain how this relates to the initiates, the μύσται of column VI. Are the daimons distinguishing between the good souls and the bad souls, or between the initiated and uninitiated?

There is a certain amount of common ground between most of these theories. In putting forward my own solution, I shall try to build on their conjectures by working logically through the evidence and its implications. My argument can be reduced to four propositions:

(i) The Erinyes are the hindering daimons

The Erinyes must have been frequently mentioned in the earlier columns, as they appear four times in the few scraps that survive.[98] They must therefore play a significant part in the Derveni eschatology, and there is no indication of what this role might be if they are not the hindering daimons. As I have already argued, it is unlikely that there would be two distinct sets of hostile spirits,

[95] Piano 2016: 258.

[96] Piano 2016: 255-63; see also Chapter Seven section 5 above.

[97] Piano 2016: 131-8, 144-7.

[98] Chapter Seven section 5 above.

whose nature and functions would be easily confused. The daimons appear to be called servants of the gods (δαίμονες ... θεῶν ὑπερέται, III.6-7) and the Erinyes are called assistants of justice (Δίκης ἐπίκουροι, IV.9), which sound very similar.[99] I have already made the point that the Erinyes are not closely connected with blood kin murder outside tragedy.[100] We have, of course, already seen them play a role similar to the hindering daimons in the Pythagorean Notebooks, binding the impure souls in unbreakable bonds (D.L. 8.31).

(ii) The Eumenides are the same as the Erinyes

As I discussed above,[101] this is a traditional identification, generally accepted by at least the fourth century. I have not come across any case where the two are mentioned together but are somehow distinguished as separate beings. In column VI, the offerings by the initiates to the Eumenides are placed in close association with those of the magi to appease the hindering daimons. The magi make their offerings to the daimons, and then 'the initiates make preliminary offerings to the Eumenides in the same way the magi do' (μύσται Εὐμενίσι προθύουσι κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ μάγοις, VI.8-9). If we suppose that the Erinyes are transformed into benevolent Eumenides by the offerings and incantations, then μεθιστάναι (VI.3) must mean 'transform' rather than 'remove'.[102]

(iii) The Eumenides are souls of the dead

[99] Megino Rodríguez 2019: 32-3.

[100] Chapter Six section 6.

[101] Chapter Six section 7.

[102] See section 7 above.

This is explicitly stated: Εὐμενίδες γὰρ ψυχαί εἰσιν (VI.9-10).

(iv) The hindering daimons are souls of the dead

This follows from (i) – (iii).

In fact, if we accept the usual supplementation of line 1, this has effectively already been stated at the beginning of the column: the offerings are said to appease the souls (μειλίσσουσι τὰς ψυχάς, VI.1), and this is followed by the description of the incantations and offerings of the magi against the hindering daimons.

It does not, however, follow that all dead souls, and specifically those of the newly dead that I believe the hindering daimons were trying to hinder, are themselves also daimons. This cannot be deduced from the text we have, and I have already shown that before Plato the status of daimon appears to be granted only to a few exceptional persons after death.[103]

We have seen several cases where there was a plausible case for the Erinyes being the dead: *Iliad* 3.278-30, where the dead (οἳ ὑπένερθε καμόντες) seem to take vengeance on oath-breakers in a similar way to the Erinyes at 19.259-60, *Odyssey* 20.78, where the Pandareids are given to the Erinyes as assistants (ἀμφιπολεύειν), presumably after death, and *Seven against Thebes* 886-7, 978-9 where Aeschylus seems to say that the shade of Oedipus (πότνια τ' Οἰδίπου σκιά) has become one of the Erinyes.[104] Rohde had long ago identified the origin of the Erinyes with the souls of the dead, though his further conjecture that they were the souls of the murdered does not seem to

[103] Chapter Six section 3. See, however, section 2 above on the possibility that this is the case in the Pythagorean Notebooks.

[104] See Chapter Six section 6 for full discussion.

correspond here.[105] Certainly, this role for the dead could be accepted by the Stoics: 'it is not implausible, said [Chrysippus], that the living are punished by the dead' (οὐκ ἀπίθανον δέ, φησιν, ὑπὸ τῶν τελευτησάντων τιμωρεῖσθαι τοὺς ζῶντας, schol. vet. 104b).[106]

This conclusion does, however, bring with it its own difficulties. We now seem to have two types of souls, the newly dead, further divided into initiates and non-initiates, and the hindering daimons or Erinyes that enforce the separation. The question obviously arises as to why some of the dead became these hostile daimons. As I noted above,[107] the notion of bad or wicked daimons seems a fairly late development, and in any case the daimons here, though hostile to the non-initiates, are not wicked but servants of justice.

Johnston has studied certain categories of the dead who became hostile to the living.[108] The βιαιοθάνατοι were those who died a violent death.[109] The ἄωραι were girls who died prematurely, especially before childbirth, and became frightening bogy figures with names such as Μορμώ, Γελλώ, Γοργώ and Λάμια.[110] Both groups were invoked in magic and curses.[111] Hostility to the living is, however, different to having a role among the dead. Homer does put them in a special category in Hades (*Od.* 11.38-41), but they clearly have no

[105] Rohde 1925: 179.

[106] Megino Rodríguez 2019: 37-8.

[107] Chapter Six section 5.

[108] Following Rohde 1925: 210-11n148, 590-5.

[109] Johnston 1999: 127-60.

[110] Johnston 1999: 161-99.

[111] Rohde 1925: 603-5, Johnston 1999: 120-1.

special powers or functions.[112] There is nothing to indicate the presence of either group in what survives of the papyrus.

I cannot suggest any answer to this question, and so perhaps to a certain extent the conclusion that the hostile daimons were also souls of the dead must remain problematic. It does, however, seem to be the only logical way of interpreting the evidence of the text. As I remarked at the start of the section, even if it is accepted it will remain an open question whether this is simply a peculiarity of the Derveni eschatology, or whether it would also be reflected in the other sources we have been considering, were the evidence less fragmentary.

[112] Bremmer 1983: 103. Cf. Henriks 1980: 201-5.

9: Conclusion

This completes the programme I set out at the beginning of the chapter. I believe I have now established the following common characteristics in the view of the afterlife of the four sources we have been considering, the Pythagorean Notebooks, the *lex sacra* of Selinous, the Hipponion funerary gold leaf and the Derveni Papyrus:

Souls survive after death

All four sources believe in the immortality of the soul, which was possibly a minority view at the period. The Pythagorean Notebooks explicitly call it immortal. At Selinous, there are sacrifices to the Tritopatores, who are ancestors, and have therefore survived after death. The gold leaf contains instructions to the dead soul. The Derveni Papyrus refers to numberless souls, who must be the dead. We have also noted in some of the sources a relationship of the soul to winds or pneuma, and a claim to some kind of immortal or divine origin.

Dead souls are divided into two classes

In the Pythagorean Notebooks and the *lex sacra* there are pure (καθαρός) souls or Tritopatores and their impure opposite. In the gold leaf, those who possess the leaf drink from the spring of Memory, while the other dead drink from the other spring. Initiates appear in the Derveni text, and must therefore be distinguished from non-initiates. I have suggested that these distinctions may essentially be the same, and that καθαρός, with its implications of 'purified' rather than simply 'pure', may mean initiated here, a sense in which it is used by Plato.

One class has a better fate after death

In the Pythagorean Notebooks, the pure souls attain the upper regions, while the rest are bound by the Erinyes; unusually, this takes place in the air, rather than in the underworld as with the others. The soul who follows the instructions on the gold leaf will travel along the sacred road. It is reasonable to assume the Derveni initiates will be rewarded with a better fate and avoid the hindering daimons. There is no evidence on this point from Selinous. The obvious comparator is the Eleusinian mysteries, which promise the initiate a better fate in the afterlife.

The division is the result of initiation

There are explicit references to initiates (μύσται) in the Derveni Papyrus and the gold leaf. The divergence between what is described there and what we know of Eleusis makes it reasonably certain that these are not Eleusinian initiates. Although μύσται are not explicitly mentioned in the other two sources, it may be, as I suggested above, that this is what is meant by καθαρός here. It is more difficult to envisage private initiation in the context of the apparently public regulations at Selinous, but it may be either that they do refer to private mysteries or that we are here dealing with a public initiation cult.

The division was enforced by hostile daimons

The Erinyes in the Pythagorean Notebooks bind the impure souls. The hindering daimons in the Derveni Papyrus seem to perform a similar role. There is no clear evidence for Selinous; although the *elasteroi* seem to be the equivalent of the Erinyes, they are not said to take any action in relation to the souls. The guards in the gold leaf, although superficially different, do carry out

the same function as the Erinyes in enforcing the division between the two classes of souls.

The hostile daimons are neutralised by the initiation

This is made clear in the Derveni Papyrus, where the incantations and offerings of the magi are effective against the hindering daimons. At Selinous, this is less certain, but can be conjectured from the sacrifices to Zeus Meilichios ('the appeaser'), Zeus Eumenes and the Eumenides. The gold leaf, supplied by the initiators, provides the directions for the soul to pass the guards. There is no evidence for the Pythagorean Notebooks.

The hostile daimons may have been souls of the dead too

This relies on the Derveni evidence. Analysis of this shows that the Erinyes are the hindering daimons, the Eumenides are the same as the Erinyes, the Eumenides are souls of the dead, and therefore the hindering daimons are souls of the dead. Although this conclusion is generally plausible, it does have the difficulty that it leaves us with two types of soul, the newly dead and those acting as enforcers, which is not easy to explain. Even if it is accepted, it is an open question whether it is an idiosyncrasy of this one source, or is applicable to them all.

I set out to show that there is evidence in a number of scattered sources for a picture of the afterlife in classical Greece that differed significantly from that in conventional polis religion, at least excluding the Eleusinian mysteries. It involved the survival of the soul after death, a division between those with a better and a worse fate after death, enforced by hostile daimons, and a rite of initiation to neutralise the daimons and secure for its adherents the better

outcome. Although the nature of the evidence is fragmentary and often problematic, I believe I have now accomplished this.

There remains, of course, the question of who was responsible for these rites and beliefs, which as will be apparent were very different in detail, however much they shared common preconceptions. I believe they are linked to the practitioners of private initiation which I examined in an earlier chapter, and I shall discuss this further in my conclusion.

Conclusion

The first point that we needed to establish was that private initiators, defined as private religious practitioners offering rites to ensure a better fate after death, did in fact exist during this period. The evidence is limited but conclusive.

Plato refers in one place (*Phd.* 69c-d) to the uninitiated (ἀμύητος καὶ ἀτέλεστος) in the rites of Dionysus lying in mud in Hades while the initiated live with the gods (*Chapter One section 1, Chapter Three section 7*). In the *Republic* (362e-367e = *OF*573) he talks of those who go to the doors of the rich and offer them rites which free them from the terrible things that wait for everyone else after death (*Chapter One section 4*). I have suggested that what seems to be a composite picture of various cult activities presented by Demosthenes (Dem. 18.259-60 = *OF*577) includes a reference to initiation (*Chapter Three section 8*). Shortly after this period, there is plausible evidence for initiation in Egypt, with the Ptolemaic edict (*P. Berlin* 11774) on performers of Dionysiac rites and the Gurôb Papyrus (*OF*578) (*Chapter Three section 10*).

The funerary gold leaves clearly deal with the afterlife, and one (B10) speaks of initiates (μύσται) there travelling down a sacred road (πιών ὁδὸν) which must represent a better fate (*Chapter Three section 6, Chapter Seven section 4*). The requirement in many of the leaves for giving the correct answer or password also carries the same implication (*Chapter Four, Chapter Seven section 4*). The Derveni Papyrus, too, refers to initiates in what seems to be an afterlife context (col. VI) and to those who celebrate rites privately for a fee (col. XX) (*Chapter One section 6, Chapter Seven section 5*). I have argued that

by analogy the same may apply to the Pythagorean Notebooks and the *lex sacra* of Selinous (*Chapter Eight section 5*).

The private initiators, then, did exist. I do not think we know what they were called, or even if they had any specific name. Plato's 'beggar priest' (ἀγύρτης, *Resp.* 364b = *OF*573) was probably just an insult (*Chapter One section 4*), 'Orphic initiator' (Ὀρφεοτελεστής) is only clearly attested with this meaning at a later date (*Chapter One section 5*), and magus (μάγος) only appears in one source, the Derveni Papyrus (col. VI) (*Chapter One section 6*) and we have no evidence that it was in general use for an initiator.

As far as we can date the evidence, the earliest, such as the Derveni Papyrus or the gold leaf from Hipponion (B10), seems to come from the late fifth or the early fourth century. I have suggested that there may have been fertile ground for such a development for some time before this date. The concept of the soul had developed into something that both contained the essence of our personality and might survive after death (*Chapter Two section 2*), the popular picture of the afterlife now included not only the miseries of Hades but also the idyllic Isles of the Blessed (*Chapter Two section 3*), there had come into being a range of private religious practitioners of various kinds among which the initiators could easily find a place (*Chapter One section 3*), and, probably the most important, the mysteries at Eleusis had provided a widely-known and prestigious example of rites offering a better fate in the world to come (*Chapter Two section 5*).

There are faint indications that this development may have originated in Magna Graecia, source of the Hipponion gold leaf (*Chapter Three section 6*), and of the Toledo Krater (*Chapter Three section 9*) but we do not really know. The Derveni Papyrus may possibly come from an Athenian environment (*Chapter Seven section 5*), but in general the prominence of Athens in the

sources is no greater than its prominence in the sources for the period in general.

We do not know anything about their professional organisation, but an analogy with physicians seems plausible for private religious practitioners in general, and if this holds good for the initiators they will have entered their craft and learned their tenets and techniques through a mixture of hereditary transmission and some kind of apprenticeship (*Chapter One section 7*).

They appear to have co-existed with the more mainstream forms of polis religion, at least if we can rely on negative evidence, as there is no sign of any conflict. I have suggested a model in which private initiation was an optional and voluntary choice, not connected to the civic social and political structure, offered by itinerant practitioners, placing a greater emphasis on personal experience and on a personal benefit to the participants, and so different from but not opposed to polis religion (*Chapter One section 2*).

There were many other types of private religious practitioner active at this time, whose names and functions may well have overlapped (*Chapter One section 3*). The private initiators may perhaps also have shared names and functions with other groups, though we do not have enough evidence to say. There does certainly seem a connection with the cult of Dionysus, as seen in certain of the gold leaves, in Plato and Demosthenes and in the evidence from Egypt (*Chapter Three section 12*).

As to the content of their rites we know very little. Plato mentions sacrifices, incantations, feasts and what he calls childish pleasures (θυσίαις τε καὶ ἐπῳδῖς and ἡδονῶν καὶ ἑορτῶν and θυσιῶν καὶ παιδιᾶς ἡδονῶν, *Resp.* 364b-c, 364e-365a = *OF*573) (*Chapter One section 5*). The magi of the Derveni Papyrus also perform incantations (ἐπωιδὴ δὲ μάγων, VI.2), and make offerings of water,

milk (ὕδωρ καὶ γάλα, VI.6) and many-knobbed cakes (πολυόμφαλα τὰ πόπανα, VI.7) (*Chapter Seven section 5*). The rites at Selinous, though they seem public rather than private, involve the sacrifice of sheep and libations of wine and honey mixture (μελίκρατα) (*Chapter Seven section 3*). The gold leaves were obviously intended for burial with the deceased, but we do not know if they formed a component of a larger ritual, or if so whether they were an essential part of it.

Other things that may be associated (*Chapter Three sections 8*-9) include sacred objects such as bull-roarers or mirrors (*P. Gurôb* = *OF*578), a *hieros logos* or authoritative religious text, possibly ascribed to Musaeus or Orpheus (*P. Berlin* 11774, *P. Gurôb* = *OF*578, Paus. 4.26.8, 4.27.5, 8.15.2 = *OF*649, Pl. *Resp.* 364e = *OF*573), purifications with mud or bran and processions through the streets (Dem. 18.259-60 = *OF*577), prayers to other deities for their aid (*P. Gurôb* = *OF*578), a formula to be recited by the initiates (Dem. 18.259-60, *P. Gurôb*), the consultation of oracles (*P. Derv.* col. V) (*Chapter One section 6*) and possibly even a mock death (*Chapter Three section 6*). The overall impression is once again of an eclectic mix varying greatly from practitioner to practitioner.

Turning to their views on what the afterlife might be like, it was obviously basic to what they were offering that the soul survived after death, and might then obtain a better or a worse fate. Apart from that, there was no uniformity. The worse fate might be described as the horrors of Hades (Ἄιδου δεινά, *P. Derv.* V.6) (*Chapter Seven section 5*), as lying in the mud (βορβόρου κείσεται, Pl. *Phd.* 69c = *OF*434, βόρβορον πολὺν, Ar. *Ran.* 145) (*Chapter Two section 3, Chapter Three section 7*), or as bound by the Erinyes (δεῖσθαι δ’ ἐν ἀρρήκτοις δεσμοῖς ὑπ’ Ἐρινύων, D.L. 8.31) (*Chapter Seven section 2*). The better fate may be described as the thiasos of the initiates (μυστῶν θιάσους, gold leaves D5), the sacred road (πιών ὁδὸν, B10), the seats of the pure (ἕδρας ... εὐαγέων, A2-3),

the sacred meadows and groves of Persephone (λειμῶνάς θ' ἱεροὺς καὶ ἄλσεα Φερσεφονείας, A4) or the uppermost region of the air (τὸν ὕψιστον, D.L. 8.31) (*Chapter Four*, *Chapter Seven section 2*). Those who go there may live with the gods (μετὰ θεῶν οἰκήσει, Pl. *Phd.* 69c = *OF*434), or actually become gods themselves (gold leaves A1,4,5) (*Chapter Three section 7, Chapter Four*).

Some private initiators seem to have introduced other, incompatible, doctrines (*Chapter Five section 8*). There were priests and priestesses, presumably private practitioners, who believed that the soul returns here from Hades and that it dies and is born again, but never perishes (Pl. *Meno* 81a-b = *OF*424, *Leg.* 870d = *OF*433). A further doctrine, that human beings are formed for punishment and in a prison was taught in the rites (τελεταί, Arist. fr. 60 = *OF*433) and in secret (ἐν ἀπορρήτοις, Pl. *Phd.* 62b = *OF*429, 669).

The situation of the soul after death might also be portrayed very differently. It might, for example, be challenged by guards in a landscape of springs and trees (gold leaves B group) (*Chapter Four, Chapter Seven section 4*), or be called to account before Persephone and the gods of the underworld (gold leaves A group) (*Chapter Four*), or inhabit the air around us (D.L. 8.31) (*Chapter Seven section 2*) or be menaced by hindering daimons (*P. Derv.* col. VI) (*Chapter Seven section 5, Chapter 8 sections 6-8*). I have shown that in areas such as the gold leaves or the doctrine of metempsychosis, where one might at first expect a unified theory, there were in fact a great variety of inconsistent views (*Chapter Four, Chapter Five*).

We have seen throughout this investigation a number of references to Orpheus (*Chapter Two section 6*). He wrote religious or mythological poetry, such as that commented on in the Derveni Papyrus (*P. Derv.* col. XVIII, Pl. *Resp.* 364e = *OF*573, *Prt.* 316d = *OF*549, *Cra.* 400c = *OF*430) (*Chapter One section 4, Chapter Seven section 5*). He introduced many kinds of sacred rites (τελεταί),

such as those patronised by the superstitious man of Theophrastus (Theophr. *Char.* 16 = *OF*654) (*Chapter One section 5*). There was an Orphic way of life, including vegetarianism and perhaps avoidance of wool (Hdt. 2.81 = *OF*43). Orpheus and those around him (οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα) or so-called Orphics (τοῖς Ὀρφικοῖς καλουμένοις) held that the body was the tomb of the soul (Pl. *Cra.* 400b-c = *OF*430) (*Chapter Five section 6*), and that the soul was breathed in on the wind (Arist. *De an.* 410b = *OF*421) (*Chapter Eight section 2*). Something Orphic seems to have been connected with Dionysus in Olbia (*OF*463), on the evidence of the bone tablets.

Can we then say that private initiation was in some sense Orphic? Orpheus was a recognised religious authority, and for a private practitioner to say that Orpheus originated the rites or wrote the text he was using would add to their prestige. These allusions, which are not in any case very closely connected with either initiation or our fate after death, can all be accounted for in this way. If there was anything more than this, some kind of underlying Orphic system or doctrine, the evidence for it has not survived.

It is, on the other hand, clear that in many instances private initiation was bound up with the cult of Dionysus (*Chapter Three*). Even here, however, this does not appear to have been universally the case. Dionysus is not mentioned in what we have of the Derveni Papyrus or the Pythagorean Notebooks, in the *lex sacra* of Selinous or in all but a few of the gold leaves that have been found. Again, if private initiation were indeed always Dionysiac the evidence to prove this has not survived.

It seems, then, that the private initiators employed a great variety of different and inconsistent doctrines and myths and that the connection of some of them with Orpheus and Dionysus was just part of the patchwork, rather than something fundamental to them all. There is no evidence for a group of

Orphics or for the later Orphic myth of the Titans at this time (*Chapter Two section 6, Chapter Five section 7*). I have argued that the whole notion of a sect is not appropriate for Greek polytheism in the classical period (*Chapter One section 1*), and certainly we have found nothing to cast serious doubt on this conclusion.

I did, however, note in my preliminary survey of the Eleusinian mysteries (*Chapter Two section 5*) that there was a striking similarity in the *synthema* or password attributed by late sources to a variety of different mysteries, all referring to eating or drinking something and then taking something from a basket. This might suggest that, at least by this late stage, that they were all borrowing from each other.

I believe, therefore, that I have demonstrated that the doctrines and practices of the private initiators were very various and a kind of *bricolage* of mutually inconsistent views. In what might seem a paradox, I have also tried to show (*Chapters Seven-Eight*) that there is a fundamental unity. I suggest that there is at a more basic level a common picture of the afterlife that differed significantly from that in conventional polis religion, apart from the Eleusinian mysteries. Its main features were the survival of the soul after death, a division between those with a better and a worse fate after death, enforced by some kind of hostile daimons, and an initiation ritual to neutralise the daimons and secure for its adherents the better outcome. The Pythagorean Notebooks, the *lex sacra* of Selinous, the funerary gold leaves and the Derveni Papyrus are then different instantiations of a common deep structure that emerged at this period.

There is obviously much that remains unknown about the private initiators and their concepts of the afterlife, but this is as far as the surviving evidence can take us.

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Appendix

The Derveni Papyrus: a note on the text

There are earlier versions of the KPT text in [Anonymous] 1982, Tsantsanoglou 1997, Janko 2002, Jourdan 2003, Betegh 2004 and Bernabé 2004-07. Improved readings of the text in KPT are suggested in Janko 2008, Ferrari 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2014, Janko 2016b (with new photographs), Tsantsanoglou 2017, 2018 (commenting on Janko), Piano 2016: 65-82 (summarising Piano forthcoming), Laks and Most 2016: 6.373-435 (Piano), Janko *ap.* Kotwick 2017 and Piano 2019. The Center for Hellenic Studies online edition (http://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/5418) includes a comparative version. New editions have been announced as in preparation by Janko (Janko 2016b: 5) and Bernabé and Piano (Piano 2019: 20).

Piano and Janko have each used their papyrological expertise to produce significantly changed readings of the earlier lacunose columns. Unfortunately their results are in many cases completely different from each other, and I am not competent to decide which, if either, is correct. In any case, much of the text in the passages that I shall be examining is not in dispute. Rather, therefore, than either giving an unreadable text incorporating multiple alternatives which are not relevant here, or adding an unnecessarily detailed apparatus criticus, I have thought that the least unsatisfactory solution is to follow the KPT text, with those variants proposed by others that are significant for my interpretation added in footnotes.

Concordances

Orphicorum fragmenta Bernabé *OF* - Kern

OF	**Kern**		***OF***	**Kern**		***OF***	**Kern**		***OF***	**Kern**
22	15-16		428	6		475	-		577	205T
26	17		429	7		476	32a		578	31
33	23		430	8		477	-		585	-
34	210		431	4		478	32b		588	34
37	9		432	-		479	32b		590	-
38	-		433	10		480	32b		591	-
39	194T		434	4 5		481	-		594	-
43	216T		435	-		482	-		595	-
46	-		436	228a		483	-		596	-
59	36 301		439	-		484	-		625	90T
	213		440	-		484a	-			p230
67	29		441	-		485	-		626	90T
114	55 56 60		442	-		486	-			111T
	76		443	-		487	32f		627	213T
283	210 303		444	-		488	32c		631	214T
306	34 214		445	142		489	32d		635	-
318	34 35		447	-		490	32e		637	-
	210 214		449	-		491	32g		640	-
	220		450	-		492	47		649	219T
320	62 140		451	-		493	-		650	216T
	215 220		452	-		493a	-		653	203T
	210T		455	-		496n	-		654	207T
	224T		456	-		510	90T		655	208T
338	224		457	-		511	91T		656	-
348	229 230		459	20		512	23		657	-
350	232		460	-		547	90T		666	-
365	40		461	-		548	-		667	8
404	26		462	-		549	5 92T		668	-
421	27		463	-		563	-		669	5 7 55
422	228b		464	-		567	p230			92T
423	-		465	-		573	3		802	318
424	-		472	-		575	3		814	83T
427	28		474	-		576	5 235		818	85T

OF	**Kern**		***OF***	**Kern**		***OF***	**Kern**		***OF***	**Kern**
819	323 85T		983	60T			p355		1144	222T
880	10T		1006	58T		1037	60T			248T
899	22T 58T		1007	78T			139T			249aT
	114T		1009	79T		1077	139T			250T
947	38T 49T		1018	220-5T		1113	186T			449T
972	-			256aT			194T		1149	254T

Kern	***OF***		**Kern**	***OF***		**Kern**	***OF***		**Kern**	***OF***
3	573 575		32e	490		228a	436			625 626
4	431 434		32f	487		228b	422		91T	511
5	434 549		32g	491		229	348		92T	549 669
	576 669		34	306 318		230	348		111T	626
6	428			588		232	350		114T	899
7	429 669		35	318		235	576		139T	1037
8	430 667		36	59		301	59			1077
9	37		40	365		303	283		186T	1113
10	433		47	492		318	802		194T	39 1113
15	22		55	114 669		323	819		203T	653
16	22		56	114		10T	880		205T	577
17	26		60	114		22T	899		207T	654
20	459		62	320		38T	947		208T	655
23	33 512		76	114		49T	947		210T	320
26	404		140	320		58T	899		213T	627
27	421		142	445			1006		214T	631
28	427		210	34 283		60T	983		216T	43 650
29	67			318			1037		219T	649
31	578		213	59		79T	1007		220T	1018
32a	476		214	306 318		79T	1009		221T	1018
32b	478-80		215	320		83T	814		222T	1018
32c	488		220	318 320		85T	818			1144
32d	489		224	338		90T	510 547		223T	1018

Kern	***OF***		**Kern**	***OF***		**Kern**	***OF***			
224T	320		248T	1144		254T	1149			
	1018		249aT	1144		256aT	1018			
225T	1018		250T	1144		449T	1144			

Gold leaves

Edmonds 2011b	***OF***	**Bernabé & Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008**	**Graf & Johnston 2013**
A1	488	L9	5
A2	489	L10a	7
A3	490	L10b	6
A4	487	L8	3
A5	491	L11	9
B1	476	L3	2
B2	477	L4	25
B3	478	L5a	10
B4	479	L5b	11
B5	480	L5c	12
B6	481	L5d	16
B7	482	L5e	13
B8	483	L5f	14
B9	484	L6	29
B10	474	L1	1
B11	475	L2	8
B12	484a	L6a	18
C	492	L12	4
D1	485	L7a	26a
D2	486	L7b	26b
D3	493	L13	27
D4	496n	L16n	30
D5	493a	L13a	28

Empedocles DK – Wright

DK	Wright
15	106
59	51
111	101
112	102
113	105
115	107
117	108
118	112
120	115
121	113
126	110
127	131
129	99
137	124
139	120
140	127
146	132

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